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ABSTRACT

This book, second in a series of six dealing with African culture and intended for secondary level students, deals with the processes of industrialization and urbanization that are transforming the traditional way of life in Africa. Almost all of the selections in this volume were written by Africans, and they come from a variety of sources including autobiographies, novels, newspapers, and studies by social scientists. The basic purpose of the book is to capture some of the feelings, aspirations, and experiences of black Africans and, by so doing, help the reader develop a sense of empathy and a feeling of identity with human beings everywhere, recognizing the common humanity that all men share. Discussion questions are provided for the selections. The first selection is a short but insightful profile of a middle-aged cook, Kobla, who has made a remarkable adjustment to the modern world. The second selection tells the story of a young man who leaves the bush and goes to Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, in search of the good life. Students learn about some of the problems that African men who moved to the city face by reading excerpts from "Tell Me, Josephine," a "Dear Abbey" newspaper column in a Zambia weekly paper. Other selections explore a relationship between father and son, examine ways for Africans to satisfy the demands of the older generation while striking out on their own, and deal with the theme of a young man returning home to his village after spending time in the city. Life in the copperbelt of Zambia is described and results of a study of what Zambians listen to on the radio are presented. Discrimination in South Africa is the topic of two selections. (Author/RM)

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From Tribe to Town: Problems of Adjustment

EDITED BY
LEON E. CLARK

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Unit II of THROUGH AFRICAN EYES: CULTURES IN CHANGE

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The choice is not between change or no change; the choice for Africa is between changing or being changed—changing our lives under our own direction, or being changed by the impact of forces outside our control.

JULIUS NYERERE, *President of the United Republic of Tanzania*

Preface and Acknowledgments

Through African Eyes attempts to get "inside Africa" by going directly to the Africans themselves. Almost all of the selections in this unit were written by Africans, and they come from a variety of sources: autobiographies, novels, newspapers, and studies by social scientists.

Unlike traditional textbooks, *Through African Eyes* does not try to "cover" all of Africa or to offer "expert" analyses by outside observers. Instead, it focuses on a few major themes and presents material that re-creates, as authentically and concretely as possible, the reality of African life. Interpretation is left up to the reader. In effect, *Through African Eyes* has two major goals: to let Africans speak for themselves, and to let students think for themselves.

This unit follow's logically from Unit I, "Coming of Age in Africa: Continuity and Change." It deals with the "winds of change" now sweeping across the African continent. More specifically, it deals with the processes of industrialization and urbanization that are transforming the traditional way of life in Africa.

In some ways, Africa may seem different from the West, and indeed it is. But in many more ways, Africans as people

are similar to people anywhere in the world. Human beings, after all, no matter where they live, face the same basic needs: to eat, to work, to love, to play, and to get along with their fellow men. Learning how Africans manage their lives —sharing in their thoughts and theories, their emotions and dreams—should do more than provide a few insights into another continent or another culture. It should also help to lay bare the nature of the human condition. Perhaps the greatest justification for studying about other people is to learn about ourselves. If *Through African Eyes* helps further this goal of self-knowledge and in the process reveals some of the uniqueness and universality of African life, then it will serve its purpose.

* * *

Through African Eyes is the result of three years' work. It represents the first major product of the Educational Materials Project (EMPathy), a non-profit educational organization located in New York City. EMPathy was founded in June, 1967, for the express purpose of developing curricular materials for the study of other cultures in American schools and colleges.

The one man most responsible for the existence of EMPathy and hence for the development of the material represented by this book is Ward Morehouse, Director of the Center for International Programs and Comparative Studies, New York State Education Department. His unwavering support of the project has been a constant source of both personal and professional inspiration. His colleagues Dr. Arthur Osteen and Mr. Norman Abramowitz have been equally helpful in keeping EMPathy alive.

Special thanks should go to Professor Immanuel Waller-

stein, of Columbia University, for his critical evaluation; to Miss Susan Hall for her research contributions; to Dr. Howard Burnett, former president of the College Center of the Finger Lakes, for his administrative support; and to Mrs. Gladys Topkis, of Praeger Publishers, Inc., for her sufferance.

The editor, of course, bears the ultimate responsibility for the selection and editing of material, the over-all conception of the unit, and the connective writing in the text.

LEON E. CLARK

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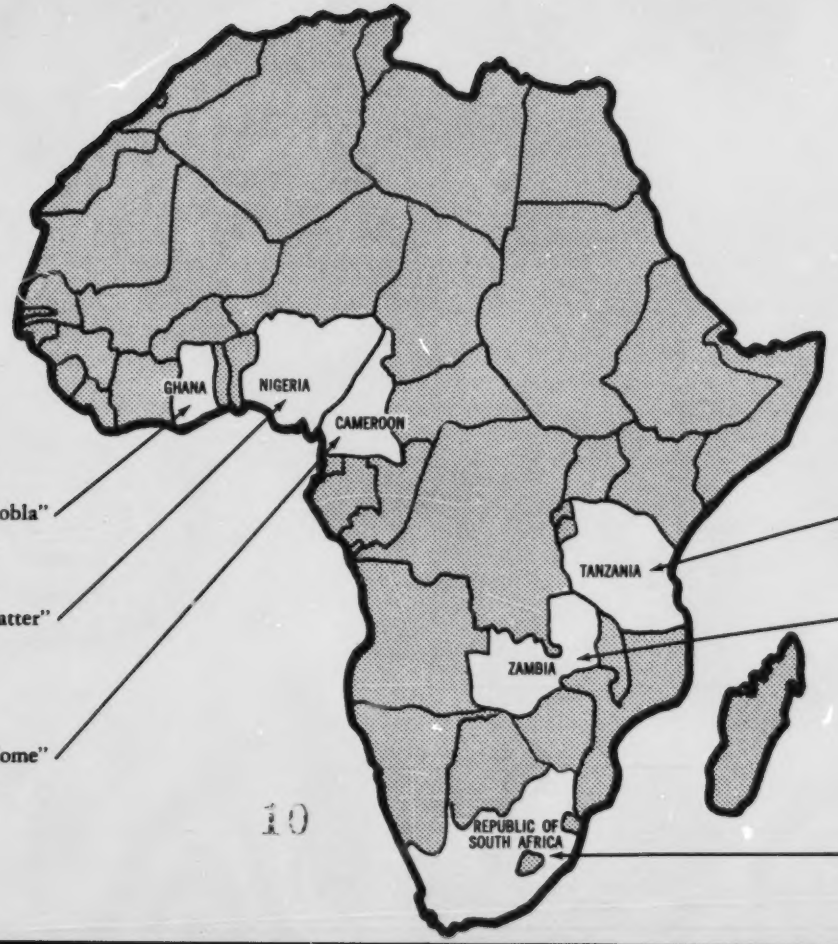
From Tribe to Town



"Kobla"

"Marriage Is a Different Matter"
"Men of Two Worlds"

"Returning Home"

"Trying to Beat the Odds"

"Tell Me, Josephine"
"Life in the Copperbelt"
"Listening to the Radio"

"Tell Freedom"
"Let Me See Your Pass, Kaffir"

Introduction

All cultures and societies change. Sometimes the change comes slowly and silently, like the eroding of rocks; sometimes it comes suddenly and with a rumble, like an earthquake. Africa today, it might be said, is going through an earthquake period of change.

Perhaps no continent in history has changed so dramatically as Africa has in the past twenty years. In 1950 there were only three independent African states: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Liberia. Today there are 39, with more to come. Just since 1960, 29 new states have appeared. Perhaps even more significant than the emergence of new states are the changes taking place in the daily lives of the people—in their jobs, their education, their marriage customs, their family relationships.

What all this change means for individual and group adjustment is almost impossible to fathom, particularly from a distance. It means that more than 800 self-contained tribes are being asked to pay allegiance to new governments and to cooperate with other tribes in a way that was neither necessary nor desirable in the past. It means that new factories are being built which will uproot people from the "security" of the land and throw them into alien towns. It means that people must develop new social contacts in these towns, supplanting old customs of friendship, marriage, dress, and entertainment. It means Western-style education that will drive a wedge between children and parents.

In short, it means the painful—but in many respects desirable—transformation of familiar reality. Imagine a world where everything you know and believe is no longer quite what it was. That is the world most Africans see and feel today.

One of the most important elements in this change is the process of urbanization, the movement of people from the rural areas into the cities. Although eight out of ten Africans still live in rural areas, they are moving to urban centers faster than any other people on earth. Why? Because that's where the action is. Or, to put this in another way, Africa is becoming industrialized. As factories and businesses spring up, people come to these industrial areas in search of work. Eventually they settle there, leaving the farms behind.

Women shop in a modern market in Abidjan, capital of the Ivory Coast and one of the fastest growing cities in the world.

Between 1950 and 1960—a mere ten years—the number of Africans living in cities increased by 69 per cent. Abidjan, the capital of the Ivory Coast, for example, grew from only 20,000 people in 1940 to 450,000 at the end of 1967. If

New York City had grown as fast, it would have leaped in the same period from 7.5 million to 175 million, almost the total population of the United States today. In reality, New York City today has just over 8 million residents.

Of course, a population growth in the thousands is not the same as growth in the millions, but it does suggest the problems facing the fast-growing African cities. Moreover, most of the migrants to African cities have little or no education, and no technical skills. Where will they work? Where will they live? Where will they go to school? How will they get along with people from different backgrounds?

These problems, of course, are not peculiar to Africa; they are universal. The whole world is becoming increasingly urbanized, and as a result the whole world is feeling the pressure of bulging cities—as witness the riots of New York and Detroit, Mexico City and Paris, Tokyo and Calcutta. Rapid change is taking place throughout the world today—in social attitudes, government, fashions, music, and art—and the city is the center of these changes. To understand where the world is going, then, we have to understand what is happening in the cities. And this is particularly true of Africa.

The readings in this unit deal with the important social changes taking place in Africa today. In most cases they tell of Africans who have moved from tribe to town and are facing problems of adjustment. Some of these problems are peculiar to Africa; some are typical of urbanization everywhere. But in all cases, they reveal the human struggle to carve out a new way of life, a struggle of both hope and sacrifice.

*Kobla**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Although the problems of urbanization are universal, they are most severe in developing areas such as Africa, because people have to adjust not only to the change from country life to city life but also to the change from traditional to modern culture.

Change in a culture can be created form the inside or from the outside. People either invent new ideas themselves or borrow them from other cultures. Culture borrowing is sometimes called *cultural diffusion*, the spreading of one culture to another. Change in Africa is the result of both invention and diffusion of culture, the latter mostly from Europe.

The following selection is a short but insightful profile of a middle-aged cook, Kobla, who has made a remarkable adjustment to the modern world. The husband of four women and the father of fifteen children, Kobla is thoroughly traditional, but he is also modern enough to realize that his children must be prepared for a new day.

The author of the selection, St. Clair Drake, is an Afro-American scholar recognized as an authority on urbanization in Africa. He has lectured at the University of Liberia and

* St. Clair Drake, "Social Change and Social Problems in Contemporary Africa," in Walter Goldschmidt, ed., *The United States and Africa*, Rev. Ed., New York: Praeger, 1963, pp. 222-25. © 1963 by The American Assembly.

at the University College of Ghana. He currently teaches sociology at Stanford University.

As you read "Kobla," think of these questions:

In what ways is Kobla traditional? In what ways is he modern?

How do you think his children differ from him?]

When I first met him in 1954, Kobla was a cook for a British professor at the University College of the Gold Coast, near the capital city of Accra—proud of his skill and his job. Like many of his Ewe fellow tribesmen, he had crossed the border from the neighboring French territory of Togoland to the more prosperous Gold Coast. Ewe cooks and stewards were in demand, as local tribesmen (Fant, Ga, Ashanti) had higher ambitions than being house servants. Nowadays Ewes are moving up into better jobs, and members of the Ijaw tribe from Nigeria have been doing this kind of work. [Tribes from the "backward" northern Ghana do the very dirty work in Accra.]

Kobla was then in his forties, vigorous and healthy, riding his bicycle two miles to work every day and performing as leader of the strenuous Ewe dances on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. He was a polygamist, living with his three wives and eleven children in a large mud house which his brothers and cousins had helped him build in a predominantly Ewe village near the college.

Kobla earned thirty dollars a month. His wives cultivated cassava, condiments, and vegetables on a patch of land which he and his "brothers" had cleared for planting. They also collected firewood on a forest preserve nearby, carrying it home in large bundles on their heads (the small children bring cans of water on their heads from a standpipe), and took turns keeping house and selling some of their produce

and other articles in a nearby market. Income from wages and marketing was pooled, each wife drawing a small allowance. The bulk of the meager joint income was spent for clothes, books, and school fees for the older children. Kobla had the reputation of being a just and fair husband and a skilled and patient arbiter between occasionally angry and argumentative wives.

Kobla had a well-thought-out orientation toward the modern world. Once he said to me, "I send the children to school and to the Roman church. I tell them when they be big they cannot be like me. I pray to the *trowo* [Ewe lesser gods], but they need to know the Christian gods. My women work and they help me. The educated women my sons will marry will not help them this way. They will ask the husbands for radiograms and clothes from the store and maybe even for motor cars. I tell these sons, 'You marry only one woman.' "

Kobla had no apologies to make for his own way of life. He was proud of his reputation as a good manager of a polygamous household. He was also a *bokor*—a healer using herbs and magic—and therefore respected in his village by chiefs and elders as well as by ordinary men and women. But Kobla was a realist. He knew that his children were confronting a rapidly modernizing world. He was trying to help them to get the most out of it.

When I returned to the college in 1958, I saw much of Kobla. His "master" was preparing a return to England, and Kobla was seeking help in finding a new one who would respect his sense of personal dignity as the old one had. (Despite his use of the term "master," Kobla's bearing and his tone always revealed that it meant no more to him than our own word "mister.") Above all, he wanted a new employer

who would help him to educate his children, the professor already having agreed to send his eldest son to a technical school. I received Kobla's sincere thanks for having helped a sister's son (for whom he was responsible) get a job, and before I left for America, Kobla had maneuvered me into paying high school fees for a young cousin who had been placed in his care. By now Kobla had taken a fourth wife . . . and had fifteen children.

During the summer of 1961, I was in Ghana as a consultant for the Peace Corps, and Kobla paid me a courtesy call. Never before, living as he was in an alien land, had he been willing to discuss politics with me. This time he volunteered a political observation, smiling broadly: "I have a country, now. We have 'big man,' too, now—Mr. Olympio." Kobla had become a proud citizen of a new nation, but he was not planning to return home. Economic opportunities were still better in Ghana, and the "socialist" politicians there were talking of free schooling and free textbooks —not of balancing the budget, as in Togo.

Just before he left, Kobla unwrapped a package he had brought. It turned out to be a large book with yellowed leaves. He had a favor to ask. The book was a mail-order catalog from a now defunct Chicago company that dealt in occult goods. Would I send him a set of the beads with the cross and one of the Egyptian rings made like a coiled snake with "diamonds" in the eye? My mind flashed back immediately to the time his nephew had asked for money to consult an *afa* [medicine man] for medicine to protect him against the jealousy of villagers whose sons and nephews had no patron: he was preparing to sit an exam. I wondered whether Kobla was now seeking some even heavier magic—from Chicago—to strengthen the protection shield which he was

trying to throw around his kinsmen upon whom he was expending so much thought, hard work, and money. Or did he simply want to enhance his prestige in the village?

Just before I left Ghana, I returned Kobla's visit. We sat in his shabby room with its bunk bed and two battered chairs, cluttered with his few treasured personal possessions. His old mother from Togo happened to be visiting, as well as two literate friends. When her son explained that I was the professor-friend from America who was helping "the family," she made a dignified half-curtsy, as she would have for a chief, and then withdrew to become a silent spectator. No one felt embarrassed. Her son and I went on to discuss wages and the high cost of living. As I was leaving, I noticed, on the wall, a picture of Kwame Nkrumah [then President of Ghana]—not Olympio, the President of Togo—and I remembered that somewhere in northern Ghana was Kobla's younger brother, who had been born in Ghana and was now a "big man"—a civil servant. Kobla had sent him through school.

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*Trying to Beat the Odds**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Kobla, the "hero" of the last selection, was a traditional African who had made his peace with the modern world. He was able to blend the old and the new without compromising his own beliefs. Such adjustments, although difficult, are not uncommon among middle-aged Africans.

Young Africans, on the other hand, sometimes find the adjustment more difficult, not because they have to reconcile old beliefs with new ideas, but because they had to find a means of succeeding in the modern world. They are not satisfied with traditional occupations, as Kobla was, and yet they may lack the education or skills necessary to "make it" in the competitive, commercial world.

The following selection, adapted from a 1957 study of African city life, tells (as if in his own words) the story of a young man who leaves the bush and goes to Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, in search of the good life. What chance does he have to "beat the odds?" What can be done to help such young men? What parallel situations can you find in the United States?]

* J. A. K. Leslie, *A Survey of Dar es Salaam,* London: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 102-4. Published for the East African Institute of Social Research.

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I had arrived that day from Morogoro and saw Dar es Salaam for the first time. Till then I had lived with my parents not far from the town of Morogoro itself, and had heard from my brothers of the big town on the coast. Many of my brothers and cousins had already been there and some were working there this year.

I had seen the clothes they had brought back, some of them, and heard them speak of the wages to be had; they had described the street lights, the cinemas, the dance halls, the women, and the clever town men. My father did not wish me to go, but I knew if I stayed I would soon be expected to begin again the yearly clearing of the fields. The fare to Dar was small, and I borrowed it from a young friend; one day, without saying goodbye to my parents—for they would not have agreed—I boarded the bus and went to Dar.

Dar es Salaam is perfectly situated for modern trade and commerce.

I had no news ahead but knew where to go: my elder brother lived in Ilala and worked in the commercial area, as servant to an Indian. He lived in a room in the back and got his meals from his employers. Nothing was said when I found the house, and he took me in. I helped him with his chores and he fed me, and with his help, in a few days I found a job like his, at 50 shs. [$7.00] plus food, with another Indian not far away.

That first evening my brother took me out for an hour when his employers had gone to the cinema. We strolled in the streets—Acacia Avenue, Ring Street, Kichwele, Msimbazi; I was amazed at what I saw and wished I had come down earlier. There was nothing like this at home. Every house was bright with lights. . . . The streets were thronged with crowds bigger than I would have believed could fit into any town; there was an unbelievable and exciting bustle, thrill, and glitter. In the roadway passed car after car, nose to tail, the drivers hooting and revving, gesticulating and cursing: the taxis with veiled and hooded women, a glimpse of bright garments under the veil, a flash of rings; the private cars with Indians and Europeans leaning back at ease. Big lorries were still, at that hour, unloading their bales at the shops. . . . Pawnshops were thronged and packed with more *khangas* [dresses] than the eye could count. The young men lounged at the corner with bright, cynical eyes cocked to every passerby, resplendent in their evening best. . . . I saw burly men in jeans, bold men in wide hats, arrogant men with strange hair styles parted in the middle or brushed up high in front; everyone radiated wealth, confidence, success. Life in town must be easy, the rewards great and quickly plucked. I was glad that I had left the dark, quiet hut of

my father, where I was only a boy, a messenger, a fetcher, a laborer. This was Life.

* * *

I had been six months now in Dar. I had moved from the first job, where the hours were long and the work unending, to another job and then a third. The conditions were little different and the pay was actually a little less, though the food was better.

I had moved too from living with my brother and had found a small back room in Keko which I shared with another boy of my age, each paying half the 10 shs. [$1.40] per month rent. Water from the stream was free, and we had an arrangement with a cousin, who worked at one of the furniture factories across the way, about firewood.

I had settled into the rhythm of town life, a rhythm of spring tides—dead low before payday, then a surge at the end of each month; eating till I burst at a hotel, a blind [binge] with my friend, a visit to the pawnshop to recover my pledges, and then back to the grind of the month, relying on the food I got free from my employer. At the half-month came the neaps, a small dip of extra poverty, then a small advance of pay, enough for a few good meals outside and a drink and a dance; then the dead low approached again, and all I had went into pawn, and I lived a life as quiet as I once did at home.

Each evening when work was over I went out into the street and stood and watched. There were always the same sights, the same procession of cars, the same well-dressed women in taxis, the same flush-looking boys; where did they get it from? There was a trick somewhere. I was worked as I was never worked before, but the money—for all that it

came in, in handfuls that I would not have dreamed of—went out again as fast, and there was nothing left to me but the bunch of pawn tickets, a grubby vest and shorts, and brief memories of the last high tide.

Sometimes I thought of going home, particularly in those last "tight-stretched days"—as the local slang has it—before payday. But then I thought of what my father would say and the other lads of the village. "Thought you'd make your fortune, did you? Well, what have you brought? Was the big town too much for you?"

No, I could not go home like that; I must just do one or two more months, buy some really good clothes, and show them I can beat the odds. But somehow things always got ahead of me, and the clothes never stayed with me more than a few days, never enough to get clear. I began to see that people like me never had a chance.

*Tell Me, Josephine**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The young man in the last selection, who left the "dark, quiet hut" of his native village for the excitement of "the big town on the coast," found it difficult to "beat the odds." His main problem was money. But there are other problems, too, most of them arising from the new kind of social life the city offers.

"Tell Me, Josephine" is like "Dear Abby," a newspaper column that dispenses free advice, often more witty than wise. The problems raised by the readers, however, provide interesting insights into contemporary life.

Young Africans, like young people everywhere, have problems with romance, school, marriage, and parents. These problems may take a slightly different twist in Africa, but they stem from the same causes: changing times and emotional conflict.

The "Josephine" column began running in *The Central African Mail*, a Zambia weekly paper, in 1960 and was an immediate success. From her photograph at the head of the column, Josephine appeared to be a pretty young woman, both sophisticated and friendly. Whether "she" was in fact one person or a team of writers remains a closely guarded secret.

* Barbara Hall, ed., *Tell Me, Josephine*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964, pp. 14-15, 21, 22, 28, 33, 40, 51, 54, 61, 64, 66, 75, 90, 94, 135. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster and André Deutsch Ltd.

Most of the letters to "Josephine" are written by men, because more men than women can write in Africa. Also, African women are expected to be more conservative than men in their social attitudes and hence are less likely to express their feelings in a public letter.

As you read the letters and replies, think of these questions:

What kinds of problem do young Africans have?

Which of these problems are the result of city life?

Which do you think would be avoided in the traditional village?

How are these problems similar to those faced by young Americans? How are they different?]

---

1. "When girls go for further education we are happy, thinking our Africa is on the way up. But I worry for I find only ugly girls going for further study.

   "Has God favored ugly girls because they have no other means of getting husbands except through education? Why don't pretty girls have education too? I remain a bachelor without your advice."

   Josephine's reply: You need spectacles. There are plenty of educated beauties around. Maybe their crowds of boyfriends are blocking them from your view. Uneducated beauties are easier to spot because more men are passing them by without stopping.

2. "As a teacher, I am appointed far from my home area. Now I face the temptation of pretty, uneducated little girls. Should I choose one of these pagans and forget the dignified title of teacher? I am 18 and in dire need of a wife, and there is no choice here."

As a teacher you should know that apart from sex attraction you would have nothing in common with an uneducated wife. There are educated girls everywhere, if you search for them. In the school holidays you will be going home. Look there, and in the meantime, stay single.

3. "My uncle pays for my schooling and I want to keep learning for two more years, but he is too hard on me. He makes me find wood and chop it for the fire and take messages from his store, and grumbles too much. He is unbearable.

   "I would leave his house today but it is near the school and my mother has no money to give me for fees. My father spent his money for educating his own young brothers and he has gone to Uganda. What can I do?"

   There is a saying, "Never insult the crocodile until you have crossed the river." You want to be educated, so it is worthwhile enduring your bad-tempered uncle, surely? Be thankful he is paying for your schooling. Many boys would gladly be in your place.

4. "I heard someone say there is a place on the Copperbelt where you can buy a charm of African medicine to make a girl love you dearly. I love one but she does not even smile when I speak to her.

   "Would this charm cost more than five shillings, and is it certain to work? Also, how do you give the medicine to her? Would she refuse it when I handed her the bottle? I do not want to waste my money but am anxious for results. Do you know the address where I can get it?"

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The address I suggest is the nearest store where you can buy a box of sweets. In my opinion, any normal girl would feel more friendly to a man who offered her sweets than one offering a bottle of so-called love potion. That medicine is more likely to upset her stomach than soften her heart.

In East Africa as elsewhere, courting brings songs and smiles to teenagers.

5. "I love two girls. My mother likes them and wants me to marry them both. She says she will pay their *lobola* [the "bride-price" paid to relatives of the bride]. I am a Christian and the Bible says you must only have one wife. But it also says I must obey my parents."

When to obey a parent means you will commit a sin, you must put the Church teachings first. Polygamy does not often bring a happy life. It is unlikely

that two wives will live peaceably together, and it is a costly business as you will have two of them to feed and clothe.

6. "I am a handsome young man but for one vital obstacle. When with friends I cannot speak or laugh with my mouth open, for fear they will see my two decayed teeth. These were sharpened according to tribal custom, and this caused them to blacken.

"Because of them I do not attract girls as other boys do. Shall I dare to pull the teeth off?"

Of course you must get your teeth fixed, but don't touch them yourself, go to a dentist. If the roots are healthy he may screw in new tops, otherwise he will fix in two false teeth, and no one need know they are not your own. Once you have done this you will want to kick yourself that you waited unhappily for so long.

7. "When I was getting off a bus a group of boys stopped me. They demanded that I take off my glasses. They said I should not wear stockings. They took my scarf off my head to see if my hair was stretched straight.

"I spoke to them very soothingly. If I had not they would probably have beaten me. Then they went their way. They shouted political slogans.

"Are these boys right to cut off our hair if it is straightened? We women are in the struggle for freedom too. But is the freedom for men only?

"There are times when we wear traditional dress, but many of our boyfriends do not like this. They think we do not look modern enough.

"So what are we to do? When the men dress in expensive European suits and part their hair with razors and polish their shoes we do not do anything against them. Are we girls right, or are they?"

We girls are right. We allow them freedom to dress as they please. They are wrong when they interfere with our liberties. I think we should show these bullying youths up for what they are. We should make a big fuss. And they should find something useful to fill their time, and leave us to dress as we please.

8. "My wife wishes to give our baby girl a European name. Lily it is. I say that all proud African parents should give their children African names. Such names are beautiful and easy to pronounce.

"My wife says African names are old-fashioned. But I tell her what dignity is there for the thousands of our people whose parents named them Tickey, Sixpence, Pumpkin, or Cigarette?

"What do you say?"

Why not give your baby two names—one African, and one European. Then when she grows up she can choose for herself which she uses. Lily is not an undignified name. The national flower of our country is a flame-lily.

9. "I love a girl till Kingdom Come. But she is Chewa by tribe and I am Tumbuka. The Chewa folk use cattle for paying *lobola* but in my tribe we do not own cattle for this thing. Easier for me to deliver wild buffaloes from the forest! It is a stupid thing they ask of me.

"But at the thought of losing her, tears come to my eyes."

Few girls are worth a dowry of buffaloes. Why not save your money and go to buy cattle from the tribes that keep them? It is wise to respect tribal custom if possible.

10. "I have two elder brothers who are unmarried due to their own reasons. They love beer best. I am 21 and my parents want me to marry though it is our usual rule that elder brothers marry first. I have a beautiful, cheerful, and worth-marrying girl, and all parents want to see this marriage. Mother is getting very old and I want her to see my children before she dies.

"Still my brothers refuse to allow me to marry. Help me! Can I marry, pleasing parents but being hated by brothers?"

In my eyes your brothers are mean and selfish and are wrong to cause their parents unhappiness by stopping your wedding. In this case no one would blame you for breaking custom. Go ahead and marry!

11. "I am from Barotseland and the girl of my choice is not. I wrote a letter to my parents trying to explain all the love in my heart but they say I must leave the girl alone.

"They say, 'We have found a girl for you to marry —just send your picture and the money for *lobola*.'

"I was in town soon after birth, educated in town, and have never visited my tribal home, so know nothing of it. Can I have my girl without my parent's consent,

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or must I obey and send money and picture for a girl 'cash with order'?"

Since you are paying the *lobola* I think you have the right to choose the wife. It is one matter to follow tribal custom if you live in the village and your parents help with *lobola*. But these ways do not always suit people who live in town. Stand firm—marry the girl of your choice. Why let old customs spoil your life? Apologize to your parents and send them gifts.

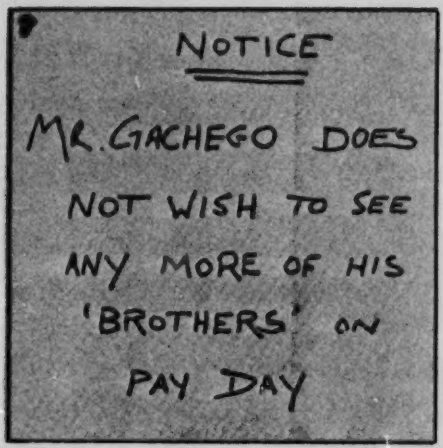
12. "I plan marriage but she is too shy, though pretty. When I visit her family she just looks at the ground or talks to the hens when I take her aside.

"When I talk lovingly she picks up a certain hen and makes hen-noises at it and smiles but not at me. I know she talks in an ordinary way to her family. I think she loves me and the parents approve, but how can I overcome this trouble?"

Be patient. A modest girl is likely to make a good wife. Tell her you wish you were a hen, and try picking up the hen before she can reach it.

13. "I am well known, with a big family to feed. My house is by the bus-stop and every day I receive visitors from the home village. It is my duty to give my tribesfolk food and money for their journey needs. But my family suffer from hunger and I go without the decent clothes my position calls for. Though I have a good job I am kept poor by home-people.

"I do not dislike them, but what can I do to be saved from them?"



This sign—very clear in its message—was posted in a Dar es Salaam office.

Word has got around of your generosity and willingness to put tribal custom before your own family's needs. You must be less generous. When you are paid, go straight to buy the clothes you need most urgently. Lock up your house sometimes when the bus is due, and take your family to visit friends. When visitors come, say they are welcome to stay overnight if in exchange for your accomodation they will share out a little of the food they have brought for the journey. Explain that having so many visitors has made you a poor man, and your children hungry. If things still do not improve, try to move to a house further from the bus-stop.

14. "At nights after work I study for my GCE [general certificate of education, equivalent to completion of

high school] by correspondence. I have a single room and pay to have electricity. Our block is the only one at present with lights. We do not have a light each; there is a hole in one wall and the bulb is set here, shining on me on one side and my neighbor next door too.

"We cannot turn the lights on and off; they are set to come on at sunset and go off at nine o'clock. This means that though I pay for my electricity I cannot study late. My neighbors do not care to study so do not complain. They sleep at nine. They say I have no case for complaining to the authorities. I argue against this. What do you say?"

Since your neighbors are all content with the arrangement and want to sleep at nine, I doubt if the management would keep the light on just for you. You are paying for the time that the light is on. I think it worth your while to buy a paraffin lamp to use when you study late. Put it on the table, not high up, so that the light will not disturb the man next door.

15. "I wrote passionate appeals to a certain girl. I did not know she had a boyfriend who is powerful in size and is in boxing contests. She gave him my letters and told me he would beat me to the ground.

"I cannot hide from him, he uses my beerhall. What can I do to save myself, for I am a tender little bloke?"

Either change your beerhall, or next time you see the boxer, quickly buy a beer for him. Then, when he is drinking it, apologize.

*Marriage Is a Different Matter**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The young Africans who opened their hearts to Josephine revealed the inner turmoil that can result from a conflict between old and new. Their letters vividly illustrate the problems of adjusting to modern city life, which in Africa is really the problem of creating a whole new way of life.

While these young people are finding their way in the the "big city," what are their parents, back home in the village, thinking? How do they view the decisions their children are making?

The following story explores a relationship between father and son. The situation is perhaps the most explosive one possible: marriage. The son, Emeka, has moved to Lagos, the capital of Nigeria; he has fallen in love with a girl from another tribe and plans to marry her. His father, of course, objects. Emeka refuses to budge. How can the conflict be resolved?

Emeka belongs to the Ibo tribe, an extremely proud people who inhabit the East Central State of Nigeria, the region that broke away from Nigeria in 1967 and tried unsuccessfully to establish the independent state of Biafra. The Ibos, as you will gather from the story, are predominantly Christian. They also have the reputation of being

* Chinua Achebe, "Beginning of the End," *The Sacrificial Egg and Other Short Stories*, Onitsha, Nigeria: Etudo Limited, 1962, pp. 21-26. Reprinted by permission of the Author and Harold Ober Associates.

well educated and very progressive. They still have a traditional way of life, however, which they feel is worth preserving. This can be said of most Africans.

The author, Chinua Achebe, is himself an Ibo and is perhaps the most famous writer in Africa today. Besides writing several well-known novels (*No Longer at Ease, Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God,* and *A Man of the People*), he has served as a director of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation.

As you read "Marriage Is a Different Matter," think of these questions:

Why would Africans want to arrange marriages for their children?

How do Americans "arrange" marriages?]

"Have you written to your father about our engagement, Emeka?" asked Nene one afternoon as she sat with Nnaemeka in her room at 16 Kasanga Street, Lagos.

"Don't you think it's better to put off telling him till I go home on leave?"

"But why? Your leave is such a long way off yet—six weeks. He should be let into our happiness now."

Nnaemeka was silent for some time, and then began very slowly as if he groped for his words: "I wish I were sure it would be happiness to him."

"Of course it must," replied Nene, a little surprised. "Why shouldn't it?"

"You have lived in Lagos all your life, and you know very little about people in remote parts of the country."

"Do you mean they are so unlike other people that they are unhappy when their sons are engaged to marry?" asked Nene, her surprise being now visible.

"Yes. They are very unhappy if the engagement has not

been arranged by them. But there is another thing which will scandalize my father even more—you are not an Ibo."

This was said so simply and so bluntly that Nene could not find speech immediately. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Lagos it had never occurred to her that a person's tribe could determine whom he married.

At last she said, "You don't really mean that he will object to your marrying me simply on that account? I had always thought the Ibos were kindly disposed to other people."

"So they are. But when it comes to marriage it's a different matter. And this," he added, "is not peculiar to the Ibos. If your father were alive and lived in the heart of Ibibio-land he would be equally parochial."

"Perhaps he would. As your father is so fond of you, however, he will forgive you." She was still unable to appreciate the full seriousness of the situation.

"But it would not be wise, though, to break the news to him by writing. A letter will bring it upon him with a shock."

As he walked home that evening he turned over in his mind different ways of overcoming his father's opposition. That he would oppose the marriage was beyond doubt. But Nnaemeka was equally certain that no opposition could be so savage that it would not yield to Nene's charms. Fully convinced of this, he was in a very happy frame of mind when he got home. In this mood he opened a letter that had just come from his father. Immediately his face clouded and he threw himself heavily into the nearest chair. He knew his father was very fond of him, his only son; and he could not find it in his heart to wound his feelings.

I have found a girl who will suit you admirably—Ugoye Nwele, the eldest daughter of our neighbor. She has had

proper Christian upbringing and she stopped schooling two years ago when her father (a man of sound judgment) felt she had learnt enough to make her a good wife. Her Sunday School teacher had told me that she reads her Bible very fluently. I hope we shall begin negotiations when you come home in December.

One evening six weeks later Nnaemeka was sitting with his father under a cassia tree. This was the old man's retreat where he went to read his Bible when the parching December sun had set and a fresh, reviving wind played on the leaves.

"My dear father" began Nnaemeka suddenly, "I have come to ask for forgiveness."

"Forgiveness for what, my son?" he asked in amazement.

"It's all about this marriage question."

"What about it?"

"I can't—we must—I mean it is impossible for me to marry Nweke's daughter."

"Impossible? Why?" asked his father, still looking into his Bible.

"I don't love her."

"Nobody said you did. Do you mean you hate her?" he asked.

"I don't really but . . ."

"Look here, my son," interrupted his father, "what one looks for in a wife are a good character and a Christian background."

Nnaemeka saw there was no hope along the present line of argument.

"Moreover," he said, "I am engaged to marry another girl who has all Miss Nweke's good qualities, and who . . ."

His father did not believe his ears. "What did you say?" he asked slowly and disconcertingly.

"She is a good Christian," his son went on, "and a teacher in a girls' school in Lagos."

"Teacher, did you say? If you consider that a qualification for a good wife I should like to point out to you, Emeka, that no Christian woman should teach. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says that women should keep silence." He rose slowly from his seat and paced forwards and backwards. This was his pet subject and he condemned vehemently those church leaders who have encouraged women to teach in their schools. After he had spent his emotion on a long homily he at last came back to his son's engagement.

"Whose daughter is she, anyway?"

"She is Nene Atang."

"What!" thundered his father as he realized that the name was not Ibo. "Neneataga, what does that mean?"

"Nene Atang from Calabar. She is the only girl I can marry." This was a very rash reply and Nnaemeka expected the storm to burst. But it did not. His father merely walked away into his room. This attitude was most unexpected and perplexed Nnaemeka. His father's silence was infinitely more menacing than a flood of threatening speech. That night the old man hardly ate, so completely was he upset by his son's incredible folly.

When he sent for Nnaemeka a day later he applied all possible ways of dissuasion. But the young man's heart was hardened, and his father eventually gave him up as lost.

"I owe it to you, my son, as a duty to show you what is right and what is wrong. Whoever put this idea into your head might as well have cut your throat. It is Satan's work." He waved his son away.

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"You will change your mind, father, when you know Nene."

"I shall never see her," was the reply. From that night the father scarcely spoke to his son. He did not, however, cease hoping that he would realize how serious was the danger he was heading for. Day and night he put him in his prayers.

Nnaemeka, on his own part, was very deeply affected by his father's grief. But he kept hoping that it would pass away. If it had occurred to him that never in the history of his people had a man married a woman who spoke a different tongue, he might have thought differently. "It has never been heard," was the verdict of an old man speaking a few weeks later. In that short sentence he crystallized the philosophy of his people. This man had come to commiserate with Okeke when news went round about his son's behavior. By that time Nnaemeka had gone back to Lagos.

"It has never been heard," said the old man with a sad shake of his head.

"What did Our Lord say?" asked another gentleman who was thin and over seventy. "Sons shall rise against their fathers," he continued as no one had volunteered an answer.

"It is the beginning of the end," another man took up. The discussion thus tending to become theological, Madubogwu, a highly practical man, brought it down once more to the ordinary level.

"Have you thought of consulting a native doctor about your son?" he asked Nnaemeka's father.

"He isn't sick," was the reply.

"What is he, then, I should like to know? His mind is diseased and only a good herbalist can bring him back to his right senses. The medicine he requires is *Amalile*—the

same that women apply with success to recapture their husbands' affection when it strays from them."

"That is perfectly true," said another gentleman.

"I shall not call in a native doctor." Nnaemeka's father was considerably ahead of his more superstitious neighbors. "Have you forgotten Mrs. Ochuba's case?" he asked.

"But it was her fault," said Madubogwu. "She ought to have gone to an honest herbalist. She was a clever woman, nevertheless."

"She was a wicked murderess," vouchsafed a gentleman of quality who rarely argued with his neighbors because, he said, they were incapable of reasoning. "The medicine was prepared for her husband and would have been perfectly beneficial to him. It was wicked to put it into the herbalist's food."

* * *

Six months later, Nnaemeka was showing his young wife a short letter from his father:

> It amazes me that you could be so foolish as to send me your wedding picture. I would have sent it back. But on further thought I decided to cut off your wife and send it back to you because I have nothing to do with her. How I wish that I had nothing to do with you too.

When Nene read through this letter and looked at the mutilated picture her eyes filled with tears.

"Can't I do anything to help change his mind?" she sobbed.

"Not yet, my darling," replied her husband. "He is essentially good natured and will one day look more kindly on our marriage." But years passed and the one day did not come.

For eight years, Okeke would have nothing to do with

his son, Nnaemeka. Only three times (when Nnaemeka asked to come home and spend his leave) did he write to him.

"I can't have you in my house," he replied on one occasion. "It can be of no interest to me where or how you spend your leave—or your life, for that matter."

The prejudice against Nnaemeka's marriage was not confined to his little village. In Lagos (especially among his people who worked there) it showed itself in a different way. Their women, when they met at their village meeting, were not hostile to Nene. Rather, they paid her such excessive deference as to make her feel she was not one of them. But as time went on, Nene gradually broke through this prejudice and even made friends among them, and they grudgingly admitted that she kept her home much better than most of them.

The story eventually got to the little village in the heart of the Ibo country that Nnaemeka and his young wife were the happiest couple among their people in Lagos. But his father was one of the few people in the village who knew nothing about this. He always walked out from any company whenever the conversation turned to his son. By a tremendous effort of will he had succeeded in pushing his son to the back of his mind. The strain had nearly killed him but he persevered.

Then one day he received a letter from Nene, and in spite of himself he began to glance through it perfunctorily until all of a sudden the expression on his face changed and he began to read more carefully.

> . . . Our two sons, from the day they learnt that they have a grandfather, have insisted on being taken to him.

> I find it impossible to tell them that you will not see them. I implore you to allow Nnaemeka to bring them home for a short time during his leave next month. I shall remain here in Lagos . . .

The old man at once felt the resolution he had built up over so many years falling in. He was telling himself that he must not give in. He tried to steel his heart against all emotional appeals. The internal conflict was terrible. He leaned against a window and looked out. It was one of those rare occasions when even Nature takes a hand in a human fight. The sky was overcast with heavy black clouds. Very soon it began to rain—the first rain in the year. It came down in large sharp drops and was accompanied by the lightening and thunder which mark a change of season. Okeke was trying hard not to think of his grandchildren. But he knew he was fighting a losing battle. He tried to hum a favorite hymn tune but the pattering of large raindrops on the roof supplied a harsh accompaniment. He gave it up and was immediately thinking of the children. How could he shut his door against them? By a curious mental process he imagined them standing, sad and forsaken, under the harsh angry weather—shut out from his house.

That night he hardly slept, from remorse.

*Men of Two Worlds**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Many young Africans in the cities are caught between two worlds: the traditional and the modern. For Nnaemeka, in the last story, the problem was marriage. For some of the young people in "Tell Me, Josephine" the problem was adapting to a new social life. In general, the dilemma facing young people is this: how to satisfy the demands of the older generation while striking out on your own.

In a sense, the problem boils down to a question of allegiance. Will young Africans maintain the traditional allegiance to the group—the family, the clan, and the tribe? Or will they shift their allegiance to the individual—to themselves? As past readings have indicated, the group is all-important in traditional societies. A person's entire way of life—including his occupation, language, religious beliefs, and life style—depends upon the group he belongs to. The group takes care of its members; it arranges marriages, finds jobs, and offers assistance of all kinds when needed. At the same time, the individual subordinates himself to the group. Kobla, for example, had the help of his kin group in building his house, but in turn he put his cousins and nephews through school.

This group system worked very well in Africa as long as the group stayed together. But what happens when the

* "Men of Two Worlds," from *Drum* Magazine, Lagos, Nigeria; as reprinted in *Atlas*, Feb., 1967, pp. 44-45.

group breaks up, when the young people leave the tribal areas and go into the cities? In "Men of Two Worlds" you will meet some successful young Africans working in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. They have beaten the odds when it comes to making money, but they haven't solved the problem of blending the old and new. Will they ever find a solution, or will they live the rest of their lives with a kind of split personality?

Drum Magazine began as a monthly in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the 1950's. Now it is published weekly in Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, and has become a mass magazine. It contains news and features on aspects of African life ranging from sports and jazz to political events. The following article illustrates the magazine's vivid journalistic treatment of contemporary African problems.

As you read "Men of Two Worlds," think of these questions:

In what ways are these Africans "men of two worlds"?

What will eventually bring these "two worlds" together?

How is the government of Kenya helping to kill tribalism?]

Nelson Ebosa from Kakamega is an intelligent young man with a bright future. He has a good job as an executive officer with the Income Tax Department in Nairobi. He smiles easily, laughs a lot, is an immaculate but not flashy dresser, and likes the good life. He is very much a man of the world, but he has a problem, for, in fact, he is very much a man of two worlds.

While mentally adapted to the city life which holds his future, he is still financially tied to the village of his past—tied by bonds of customs which make him, as a fairly well-off young man, feel responsible for helping to support the poorer members of his "extended" family in the village.

Nelson is unfortunate. Two generations ago, he would have had no problem. He would still be in the village and would have accepted without thinking the clan custom. Had he been born two generations from now he would have had no problem. The government's expanding welfare program of free primary education and free medical services, and the emphasis on community development without tribalism, would have killed the obligations of the clan system.

But this is not the case at the moment. Nelson, and thousands like him, feel the financial strain of both worlds, and complain. They complain that the high cost of living in the city makes the demands of uncles, cousins, nephews, and even third and fourth cousins a burden they cannot afford on their salaries.

"You may be getting your food on credit at the *duka* [store], but when they come to your house and see it they think you are rich, and when you are not keen to help them they say the city has polluted you," Nelson shrugged.

"I have changed my way of life a lot since I came to Nairobi five years ago. You see a better way of life and you want it. I don't think the way they do in the village any more. I think the old system will die out, but at the moment we just have to face it and help when we can. It isn't possible to save any money like this, for you just don't know who will arrive wanting help and you feel obligated to give it.

"Perhaps when you were a child someone in the clan gave a few shillings . . . toward your education. It was appreciated, but that doesn't make you feel obligated to go on supporting that person for the rest of your life. It is a high price to pay. It's bad enough when you are single. When you get married, you take on your wife's relatives as well.

"A lot of young Africans find this very difficult. I think when my children grow up the system will have died out.

I will probably have a pension, so they won't have to worry about me, and since they will have been brought up in the city, they won't have a tribal conscience. It will be much better for them."

Jonathan K. is a Nairobi businessman. He employs more than thirty people, has a comfortable house, an attractive wife, and three children. He is looking for a smaller house, not because he is unhappy with the one he has, but because he wants to live quietly with his own family, without a houseful of brothers, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews—as well as loosely related friends—who have claimed his hospitality in the name of clan kinship. He earns enough to support his immediate family in comfort, but his extended family drains his pocket. If he has a smaller house, he feels he can plead lack of space to stop the flow.

Mr. Wilson M. is in Kampala. His father wisely saw the need for a full education for his son. Now Wilson M. is a university graduate holding a well-paid position. He gladly supports his parents, but finds he is also expected to support four uncles, three nephews, and other "friends" who appeared when they discovered he was earning good money.

Few young men have as yet cut themselves off from the system. The clan ties are still too strong. All accept it, some grudgingly, some passively, a few willingly—depending on the burden it imposes.

"Call it, if you like, a crude form of insurance," said a well-paid young man we will call Francis. "By that I mean that you know that if something happens to you, your dependents will be taken care of.

Francis is not badly hit in the wallet by demands. He is the youngest of his parents' sons and has others to share the load.

"The family or clan is limited, you know," he said. "Your main area of obligation is to your parents and to your brothers and their families. Say, for example, a child of a poorer brother shows he is very bright. You would then offer to pay his school fees, which in the rural areas, let's face it, are not very much.

"The system is vital to the social lives of our people. It is one of the foundations of our type of socialism. There is a lot of misunderstanding about it, but it works quite well in the majority of cases. Most people accept the burden proudly."

Francis, since he does not face a large burden, can afford to be philosophical about it, and it is true that it was a vital factor in the lives of rural Africans—but its importance is fading.

Two of the major demands for help are for education and medical bills. The government has started free primary education and free hospital treatment. The clan system fosters two of the things the government is pledged to stamp out—tribalism and "brotherization" in jobs. One of the major obligations under the system is finding jobs for your relatives. It takes integrity for someone in a position to do so to be honest enough to resist the temptation.

Kenya's Director for Community Development, Jonathan Njenga, puts it this way: "The government is dedicated to killing tribalism. We are trying to get people to work together on a community basis which is necessary in the settlement areas where people of one tribe are sent into another area."

Young African executives look completely at home in a modern setting, but many are still "men of two worlds."

He spoke of his feelings on the effects of the extended-family system: "Five years ago, I felt I had an obligation to educate my little brothers and sisters and give my father an allowance. My education had been intended as an investment for the rest of the family.

"But as time goes on, I find I have to educate my own children, and run a car, and pay higher school fees because I want my children to go to a better school. I find myself in a position where I can make little contribution to the rest of my family.

"The more people are educated, the wider their horizons become. They see there is a better way of life than their parents had. It is like being in a different world. The educated young man steps into his new world and finds that his foot in the other world is dragging him.

The roles of women as well as men have been changed by city life.

"We must accept the wider concept—that of building the nation through community development, irrespective of tribal or clan ties. The revolt away from tribalism has developed over the past ten years and is a direct result of the widening net of education.

"East Africa is changing. More and more of us have a better way of life. When my children go with us to visit my parents in Kiambu, they feel out of place. They see the bare floor, the different food, and they cannot understand it as we can. It is not part of their lives. They will never scorn their origins, but it is just no longer their way of life. They have something better to look forward to. But the old folks are resentful that we do not give them more."

Mr. Njenga's problem is mirrored throughout East Africa. There is no doubt that the extended-family system within

the clan has played a vital part in tribal life. But for many, life is no longer tribal, and the same set of rules can no longer be applied. There is also little doubt that the system is on the way out—a victim of progress, ambition, and a forward-looking Kenya government. Between the past and the future stands a group of young men who are paying for the privilege of being men of two worlds.

*Returning Home**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION]: Thus far we have focused on the movement of village Africans into the cities. But some young Africans return to the rural areas, using their modern education to enhance their traditional positions. It is not unheard of, for example, to find a college-educated boy exploiting his new prestige in an attempt to become tribal chief. Thus modernization can be used for traditional purposes as well as for change.

At the same time, we should remember that change is not limited to the cities. True, urban areas serve as incubators for new ideas and values, but they also stimulate change in the villages. A young man returning home, while finding himself more important in traditional terms because of his education, will also provoke changes in tradition by his very presence in the village.

The following selection, from Mongo Beti's novel *Mission to Kala,* illustrates both these reactions. A young man, Medza, has just failed his college finals. He returns to his village and, much to his surprise, finds that a scholar (even a failed one) has immense prestige. He becomes the center of attraction in a traditional setting because of his modern

* Mongo Beti, *Mission to Kala,* London: Heinemann, 1966, pp. 47-48, 58-59, 60-61, 62-65.

education. At the same time he has a modernizing effect on the villagers; he is their messenger from the new world.

Mongo Beti is one of Africa's best-known writers in French. Born in the Cameroon Republic in 1930, he completed high school at home and then studied at the University of Aix-en-Provence and the Sorbonne. *Mission to Kala* has won a French literary prize.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

What do the villagers think of Medza's modern education?

What does Medza think of it?]

Everyone in the village was paying court to me, especially my uncle, who went to great and obvious trouble to do me little services. He showed me a good deal more respect than an elderly man should show a youth—certainly more than was sanctioned by custom. Yet, unlike the usual unkind comments which such behavior normally provokes, in this case nothing at all was said by those who came to the house. Everyone seemed to think it was a favor simply to talk with me. As soon as I realized this I got into an agony of embarrassment.

I had become a kind of universal pet or mascot for the whole of Kala: not only a strange animal, but an animal that they liked to examine at close quarters, and to hear roar, or howl, or bray, or whatever. The women used to turn up in droves, too, and look me over with that greedy up-and-down stripping expression common to women the world over. Never in my life have I been examined so minutely or with so little shame.

In the afternoon one woman, hardly bothering to conceal her feelings, put her cards more or less on the table.

"Young man," she said, "you shouldn't take offense at people being so interested in you. We don't see a college-educated boy like you here every day of the week—*and* a city dweller into the bargain!"

Heavens, I had forgotten that. Educated *and* a city dweller. She's right, damn it, I thought, after a moment's stunned silence. As an educated city boy, my uppermost thought was that I had made a stupid nonsense of my exams. But never mind; a diploma, even by default, was a rare enough commodity in the Kala market. So that was it: educated *and* a city dweller. Why hadn't I thought of it before?

Now the woman began to ask me questions. She was about the same age as my mother, but prematurely aged by the heavy manual labor that all these up-country people undertake.

"What do they teach you at school?" she demanded.

"Who?"

"The whites, of course, boy! What do they teach you?"

The room was crowded, so I couldn't laugh, which was what I wanted to do.

"What do they teach me? Oh, heaps of things," I said unconvincingly.

The whole thing embarrassed me horribly. I wanted to be kind to this woman; she meant well enough, but how on earth was I to give her the most elementary notion of such things as geography, advanced mathematics, or the social sciences? Nevertheless, I had a shot at it; with gestures and stumbling, awkward, vague phrases I did my best.

Her one desire was to keep me well disposed toward her, willing to oblige.

"Come and see us one of these evenings," she suggested finally. "We'd be delighted to see you, my husband and I. My husband admires you enormously, you know. He's sworn by you for the last two days. Come and visit us one night soon, and bring your uncle with you." . . .

If only they wouldn't treat me just as a scholar and nothing else! I'd have given all the diplomas in the world to swim like Duckfoot Johnny, or to dance like the Boneless Wonder, or to have the sexual experience of Petrus Son-of-God, or to throw an *assegai* (spear) like Zambo. [These are village boys who have not been Western educated. Zambo is Medza's cousin.] I wanted desperately to eat, drink, and be happy without having to bother my head about next term, or such depressing things as revision work and orals. The very least I could do was to conquer my fear of women—even divorcées. I would soon learn how to respond to their advances. I would make up to this girl who was gone on me. I was forgetting, however, that afterward there would be no reason for her to go on pining for me.

My uncle stretched out his neck, rather like an ostrich, and gulped down an enormous mouthful of food. He then blinked several times, filled a glass with water, and swallowed that, too. Finally he cleared his throat and said: "My boy . . ." (it was still quite an effort for him to articulate clearly), "this evening we shall visit the woman who invited you to call the other day. We shall in all probability have dinner with her. We shall go round tonight about six o'clock."

"Father," said Zambo in a worried voice, "couldn't we possibly put off this visit for another day?"

"Why?" asked my uncle, astonished. "Why on earth should you want to put it off?"

"Oh, nothing. I just thought my young cousin might still be tired—and after all, there's plenty of time left for paying calls."

"Who asked your opinion, anyway?" my uncle said unanswerably. Then he turned to me. "My boy," he repeated firmly, "we are going to call on this lady *tonight*. We have to go. She would be most hurt if we didn't.". . .

"Are there many white children at your school?" my hostess inquired.

I said, yes, there were a lot.

"More white than colored?"

"No, not nearly so many."

"What are they like, these white children? Tell us what they're like," she persisted.

"Heavens—just like children anywhere, the world over—"

"Really? Just like ordinary children?"

"Exactly," I said. "They have rows, and fight, and are insubordinate—there's no difference at all."

A man's voice broke in. "And in class," he said loudly. "Are they cleverer than you in class?"

"No. They aren't either more clever or more stupid than we are. They're just the same as—as a mixed bunch."

"Will the learned gentleman please explain, then," the same voice went on, in astonished tones, "how it is that their minds work faster than ours?"

"They don't. They grasp a point no faster and no slower than we do."

"Well, well. That's really surprising. They ought to be quicker on the uptake, though, shouldn't they?"

"Why should they?" another man's voice broke in. "Why are you so determined that they should be quicker than our

children? We don't breed young animals, do we? What are you thinking of?"

"How can you ask such a question?" the first man replied. "It's perfectly reasonable to suppose that white children should learn faster than black. What are they being taught? *Their* ancestral wisdom, not ours, isn't that so? Who invented airplanes and trains and cars and steamships? The whites. Very well then. Now if it was *our* ancestral wisdom that was taught in this school, it would be normal to expect colored children to learn faster than whites, wouldn't it?". . .

[The other man then said:]

"Listen to me, all of you. Here's my personal opinion, for what it's worth. It's by no means certain that it was the whites who invented cars and airplanes and all that. When you talk about colored folk, you mean us, don't you? All right, we're nobodies. But what about all the other colored people, all over the world? How can you be sure that *they* don't make planes and trains and cars?"

To judge by the approving murmur which greeted it, this argument was a popular one. Finally the first man admitted that its proposer was probably right, yes, he might very well be right. . . .

Then they all got down to it and interrogated me non-stop. As there was a great number of them, they were often all asking me questions at once. This embarrassed me horribly, because I didn't know which ones to answer first. They varied in subject but were all of equal interest. I was utterly disconcerted, and one thing embarrassed me in particular: the attitude of the women and young girls. They absolutely devoured me with their eyes, and the expressions they wore were so unequivocal that I could not help recognizing them

for what they were at once, despite my natural modesty. It was like reading a young peasant girl's passionate love letter.

Sometimes I glanced at Zambo, who squatted in a corner miserably, indifferent to the atmosphere of enthusiasm permeating the room, perhaps even hating it, but in any case the disregarded odd man out. Occasionally I caught my uncle's eye, too; he looked strangely complacent, rather like an old French peasant who has just married off his daughter to the richest, best-looking young man in the district. He was gay and pleased, and obviously willing me to make a success of the occasion.

But I was thinking that I shouldn't see Eliza (that, I had found out, was her name); not tonight, anyway, I told myself. Looking back, I suspect Eliza had become my symbol of absolute liberty, the freedom enjoyed by country boys like Duckfoot Johnny, the Boneless Wonder, Son-of-God, and the rest. I saw this freedom as the most precious possession I could acquire, and realized at the same time that in all likelihood I should never have it. Without being aware of it, I was no more than a sacrifice on the altar of Progress and Civilization. My youth was slipping away, and I was paying a terrible price for—well, for *what?* Having gone to school, at the decree of my all-powerful father? Having been chained to my books when most children of my age were out playing games? I did not exactly feel "in love" with Eliza, but I certainly desired her. My desire was the kind most characteristic of the inexperienced male; I hardly dared admit it even to myself.

And now missing this meeting with her showed me in a vague yet compulsive fashion that if I went on as I was doing, against my natural bent, I should never be truly myself or have any real individuality. . . .

Soon Zambo got up and left, abandoning me to my unhappy dilemma, rather as though I were a drowning man being sucked under by the current and beyond any hope of rescue. I was the most unlucky man in the world, I thought.

Apart from anything else, I was stifling. The room was far too hot and very small; the air was thick with smoke, and smelt of palm wine, tobacco, and chewing-gum. I made a tremendous effort, which pushed me sluggishly, like a sack of coconuts, onto the platform of benevolent resignation and cordiality reserved for scapegoats such as myself. I no longer felt any desire to discourage the attentions of my audience; I abandoned my useless and egotistic attempts at revolt. I began to chew the local gum myself, and certainly nothing I could have done would have pleased them more.

"Look at him!" they exclaimed, audibly. "Look, he's not snobbish, for all his learning. He's chewing gum *just like us.*"

At such moments, conscious of all those staring eyes converging on me like so many rays, I got the feeling that the atmospheric gravity had at least doubled its pressure. There was a hurricane lamp burning on the table, its glass bulging and rounded like an old man's belly. The light it gave out was in fact not very strong, but to me it seemed as blinding as a searchlight set up at the same distance at point-blank range. As a result, they all saw me very clearly, and I could hardly make them out at all.

I sat there wondering to what extremes of idiocy the whole business could go. Lucky for me, I thought, that my friends couldn't see me pontificating in this half-witted fashion—and anyway, what did it matter? I realized that my affection for these people outweighed any resentment I felt at my own ridiculous position. It was certainly a serious occasion as far as they were concerned.

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"And what *do* the whites teach you?" my hostess was still inquiring mercilessly.

"Oh, heaps of things . . ."

"Come on, then. Tell us them."

"Would you understand if I did?" I snapped.

The remark was greeted with a murmur of disappointment. God, what a clanger, I thought. If I'm going to stay—and I must—I've got to behave myself.

"Listen to me, my boy," said an old man, getting to his feet and interspersing his remarks with placatory gestures, as though he were soothing a baby. "Listen. It doesn't matter if we don't understand. Tell us all the same. For you the whites are the real people, the people who matter, because you know their laguage. But we can't speak French and we never went to school. For us *you* are the white man—you are the only person who can explain these mysteries to us. If you care for us at all, my son, do this thing for us. If you refuse, we've probably lost our only chance of ever being able to learn the white man's wisdom. Tell us, my son."

He has a point there, I thought. These people were all so damnably persuasive.

"All right, then," I said. "They teach us—let's see—well, geography."

"Geography?" exclaimed someone, fumbling over the unfamiliar syllables. "What's that?"

I gave them what must have been the most feeble, certainly the most arguable definition of geography ever presented to any audience. I had never tried to formulate such a definition in my native tongue before, and now the thing had to be done for an audience who hung on my every word. Then, to make my ideas more intelligible, I decided to illustrate them with an example. I found myself (somewhat to my

surprise) telling these simple people about New York—an inconceivable city to them, with its more than seven million inhabitants, and skyscrapers of anything up to seventy-five floors, soaring up for a thousand feet. It was child's play to describe New York, probably because my only knowledge of it derived from the cinema. There was no longer any question of my drying up. I warmed to the theme, losing myself in an intoxicating sea of details. I imagined that my audience would be galvanized by the picture I conjured up; but in fact I went to all this trouble for nothing. Still anxious to avoid giving them complexes, I omitted to tell them that Americans were in the habit of lynching Negroes in the street, simply because of the color of their skin. No, the really astonishing thing, which still bothers me in retrospect, was that America left these simple-minded people stone-cold indifferent.

*Life in the Copperbelt**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Nearly half the working people in Zambia live in the Copperbelt, a strip of land smaller than Rhode Island, which produces about 15 per cent of the world's copper.

Much of this copper is sold to the United States. In fact, Zambian copper is so important to us that we sent huge transport planes into Zambia to airlift the copper out in 1965 and 1966, when land routes were closed. The problem was that Zambia's neighbor, Southern Rhodesia, had broken away from England illegally, making it impossible to cross her territory. Southern Rhodesia was—and still is—controlled by a white regime that denies the vote to most black residents. England, the former colonial ruler, wanted to change this policy, so the white Southern Rhodesians set up their own government in order to preserve the system of racism. The United States does not recognize the illegal state of Southern Rhodesia.

For years Africans have been leaving their quiet, airy villages in the bush to move into the crowded mining towns of the Copperbelt. Why? To make money, to find a new and (they hope) better way of life. In 1961 there were 120,000 Africans and 38,000 Europeans living in the Copperbelt.

What happens when traditional Africans, accustomed to a rural existence, are crowded together in a mining town? What happens to their way of life? To find the answers to

* John V. Taylor and Dorothea A. Lehman, *Christians of the Copperbelt*, London: SCM Press, 1961, pp. 65-93.

these questions, John V. Taylor and Dorothea A. Lehman conducted a study in 1958. Their object was to determine the factors affecting the growth of the Christian church in the Copperbelt towns, but what they describe is relevant to a broader understanding of the pressures for change in these cultural "melting pots."

As you read "Life in the Copperbelt," think of these questions:

What happens to families when they move to the Copperbelt?

What new organizations spring up? Why?]

THE FAMILY

It is not surprising that young men move so easily out of the village into the towns, because even in the old days they had to leave their family group and attach themselves to their father-in-law's. The important difference in the modern situation is that they stay isolated, living as individuals not immediately integrated into a new family, but charged instead with establishing a family themselves, on an entirely different basis.

At Nchanga Mine, the usual sequence is that a man signs on and is allocated a place in the mine's single quarters. When he has saved enough money for a ticket for a bus or railway journey for his wife, he asks the township manager for married quarters. When these are available the manager signs a form to agree that his wife may come. . . .

In May, 1958, Nchanga African Mine Township had 4,152 houses for married men, 2,750 places in "single quarters," and nearly 900 names on the waiting list for the 550 new houses designed for employees with three or four

children. Each new house has two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, shower, and lavatory.

It is easy to see how the move to the mines breaks the old African family pattern. Very rarely several members of a big village family group, a *"sib,"* move into the same compound at one time. But even if they do, it is quite impossible for them to live together. The two- or three-room houses break each basic family of husband, wife, and children out of its larger village setting of clusters of houses where three or even four generations lived together.

Sometimes the older wives refuse to follow their husbands, because they are reluctant to break away from their maternal *sib:* this ends usually in a divorce. Young girls who marry into town often return to their mothers for the birth of the first child. Very few grandmothers follow their daughters into town except for short periods. . . .

One of the most frequently heard complaints about town housing is that the houses are too small. When a family has growing children, there is no possibility of giving boys and girls separate bedrooms, and visitors have to sleep in the kitchen or in a shelter in the yard. In a discussion, the members of an African women's club of the Nchanga Welfare Center said, "If we had bigger houses we would keep the girls here. But the grandmothers like them to go and stay in the village. Girls learn to obey in the villages but not here.". . .

The Mine Township management recognizes only parents and children as a legitimate family, and they insist with varying degrees of strictness that only one wife can be in residence, though the customary native law does not ban polygamy. Other members of a family have to ask for a visitor's permit, which normally is not granted for more than a fortnight [two weeks]. . . .

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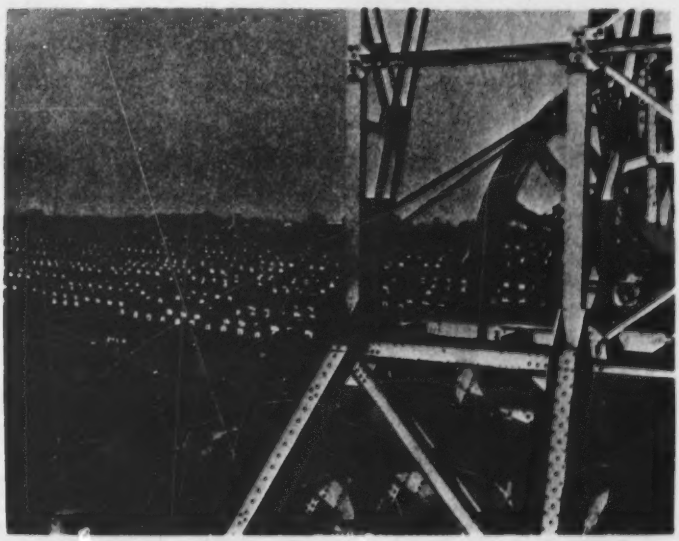
The relationship between husband and wife has to undergo difficult and profound adjustments to this urban situation in which they are isolated from their familiar village groups. . . . Their neighbors . . . are more often than not of different tribes, with foreign dialects and customs. Those who have grown up in town life and have some education do not usually find it difficult. . . . But difficulties often reach the breaking point when the marriage partners' standards of education or tribal customs differ. . . . Sometimes, for example, a man on the mines marries a woman who is of a different tribe or who has been educated. Chisanga, a teacher, married an educated nurse of a foreign tribe. They both found work in a mining town. After seven years, he had high praise for her housewifery, for her participation in his interests and the problems of his job, for her loving and efficient care of their four children, and for her patience with his mother, who had come to live with them after his father's death. But his wife, while showing that she also was devoted to her husband and children, confessed that she was often very unhappy because she felt very isolated and had not found a satisfactory place in the community. . . . "I have no friend here," she said. "They blame me for speaking English. They say, 'We fear people from the South.' "

"I cook what my husband likes; I serve what his friends are used to eating and in the way they like it served. But they still don't like me."

And she did not manage to get on with her husband's family. . . . Since Chisanga is the only child of his widowed mother, he asked her to come from the village and live with them on the compound. He underestimated the troubles which the language question—among other problems—would cause between the two women in his house. His

mother refused to understand the broken Bemba which the normally English-speaking daughter-in-law used to communicate with her and she resented the fact that her grandchildren were brought up speaking a "foreign language."

Chisanga's wife, Ruth, with her nursing training, could not help feeling worried about the grandmother's habits. "Her standard of hygiene is very low," she commented. "She



The machinery of mining looms over the monotonous and crowded African dwelling areas of the Copperbelt.

does not mind sitting with her friends in the backyard next to the communal lavatory. It is difficult to teach my children proper ways when the local people have different customs.". . .

The transition from the life of the extended family to the urban life of a small basic family . . . is complicated by other changes, too. Before the move to town, children had the

whole village as their playground. . . . They toddled between houses and even into the main motor road, . . . and the mothers never appeared worried. They trusted that all adults would take equal responsibility for a child that got into danger.

This unobtrusive attention of all villagers for the safety of the children kept the little ones from getting lost by wandering into the gardens or nearby swamps, and even the older boys, who could not be restricted from setting snares in the bush or fishing in the waterholes of the swamp, were immediately and angrily called back by the women if they ventured near the waterholes which customarily supplied the drinking water for certain households. . . .

Other problems are caused by the differences between the food-producing, self-supporting economy of the village and the wage-earning, money-spending new order. Listening to the leisurely, spontaneous talk of people in the towns, especially to men, one finds that most frequently the themes are money—prices, incomes, attempts to borrow, and boasting about spending.

The wives complain that their husbands do not give them a fair share of their "ticket money" [monthly salary]. . . . Couples of the educated middle class keep their individual earnings not only in separate post-office savings books, but secret from each other. . . . When asked, "What causes more trouble, beer or money?" a group of young mothers in Nchanga Township said unanimously, "Money spoils the relationship between husband and wife. A woman who earns some money on her own has to hide it carefully or her husband will take it and spend it on beer." . . .

The adjustments to a family budget based on money are especially difficult for the women who in the villages pro-

duce and distribute the staple food. In the Bemba *chisungu* ceremony, the ceremony which initiated girls into their roles as wives, the importance of hard work in the garden to support the family, care of food in store, and all the domestic duties like fetching water . . . are impressed in strongly emotional ritual. . . . "The lazy one who smokes all day" is derided in a [traditional] song as a fool, one without wits.

Copperbelt miners use up-to-date techniques and equipment for drilling and hauling copper.

Many of the town women try to cultivate a garden in the bush surrounding the compound. When the hoeing season starts, all women's meetings—such as welfare or church classes—dwindle and every morning can be seen a general exodus of women from their homes into the bush. Some women have to walk miles to find the kind of soil they want for growing special relishes, maize, pumpkins, and spinach—all to supplement the staple food which is usually bought.

. . . Other women collect mushrooms, caterpillars, or flying ants in season.

Many women use the garden or the wild foodstuffs to get cash, selling them in the markets or to their neighbors. Another profitable activity which many Nchanga wives take up is charcoal-burning.

But the easiest and quickest gain is made by brewing and selling beer. The restrictions on this vary in different Copperbelt towns from strict prohibition of all brewing to licensing sections of the townships in turn. Most managements try, like Nchanga, to reduce home brewing with its aftereffects of quarrels and fights by making the beerhalls which they run and control more and more attractive. The town women protest against this. . . . Their main complaint is that the township's beerhalls are in unfair competition with them, that the money spent by their husbands in the beerhall should rather go, through home brewing, back into their hands. . . .

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

"On the mines," according to a Nchanga schoolteacher, "nearly every man goes to the beerhall daily, as soon as his work is over. He has nothing else to do." . . .

In the villages beer drinking was in the old days either a festival occasion or a reward for help with, for example, building a house. It was also a form of tribute to the chief, who in turn had to provide it for his visitors, the tribal councils, and . . . the people working for him. In the mine towns, a beerhall functions as a meeting place for relatives, friends, or members of the same tribe—who live miles apart in the compound, and whose houses and yards are in any case small and crowded. When a group of Bemba elders who

sat together in the beerhall were asked jokingly how they could afford bottles of beer at the end of the month, they pointed out that a number of young men drinking with them had bought these as gifts of respect. . . .

Amid all the noise and hilarity of the beerhalls, many groups sit in serious discussion. African social research assistants confirm that many "cases" of tribal members are considered at these gatherings and that the young men still listen to the moral instructions which are based on customary laws. But at the same time, it is the beerhall which provides the opportunity to meet marriageable women of other tribes . . . who may induce the men to break away from tribal customs. . . .

THE WORLD OF WORK

A villager is hardly ever isolated in his work from his social group, and the men who, for instance, return from fishing with their brothers, and then go to discuss with the headman what to do about some youngsters who damaged their nets, would not regard one activity as work and the next as relaxing in good company. But work in industry means fixed timetables and definite hours with "nothing to do," in which workers have a chance to re-establish social relations. The visit to the beerhall is an urban leisure-time activity comparable to football matches, dances, or movies. The compound drinking party when greeted with . . . "You are working?" laughed with the reply . . . "We're only resting." . . . The division of life into work hours and "off-duty" is an urban problem which has to be solved in individual ways. The young people who are attracted by the ways of town life do not see this as a difficulty, but rather as a chance of

a fuller life with a wide choice of activities. Few seem to see work as more than a way to earn money and get a house. After work, the beerhall and the welfare clubs, the night school and the handicraft center, the trade unions and the political parties, and the various church groups are open to them. . . . The decision to join one of these community activities is usually made in the first three months. The choice is, of course, to a certain extent limited by background and previous education, but also by the work group in which the newcomer finds himself. . . . Work in the mines provides contact between Europeans of varying backgrounds and men of tribes that are often very different from each other. These contacts certainly lead to social relations much wider than those which are made in the village . . . or even through modern activities like fishing for sale, trading as a hawker in the country, or work in a *boma* [government office]. As a result, it proved impossible to assume—as the mine management first assumed—that the towns could be regarded as a kind of extension of the rural communities, in which the same values and norms of social behavior would function. . . .

The representation of the working man through tribal elders who were nominated by the chiefs lost public backing when the African welfare societies, whose members came mainly from the educated class, began to express the grievances and the requests of the people much more vigorously than the conservative, customary authorities. In labor relations, unity of interest cut across tribal divisions and the new urban leaders gained their following by dealing competently with "any work calculated to improve the general welfare of Africans, to promote their contentment, and to make representations on their behalf" (Constitution of the Luanshye African Welfare and Recreational Society). The welfare so-

cieties became a training ground for future political leaders: the present members of . . . legislatures, African National Congress leaders, and trade union leaders. . . .

The new principles of common interest have united people who in domestic and personal affairs are still divided and suffering under the conflict of customary behavior, tribal loyalties, and the new possibilities of personal freedom. . . . Labor unions and political unions are bringing the "foreign" Africans together to stand up against the Other, the real stranger—the white man.

*Listening to the Radio**

PART I

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: What do residents of the mining towns of the Copperbelt think about? How do they feel about the changes taking place in their lives? How do they balance the old ways and the new?

To try to answer these questions and others, Hortense Powdermaker, professor of anthropology at Queens College, New York, asked the residents of a mining town what they listened to on the radio. The assumption, of course, is that people listen to what interests them; they listen to the programs that satisfy their emotional needs or their intellectual curiosity. If we know what they listen to, then, we will know something about how they think and feel.

This study was conducted in 1953-54. At that time very few Zambians had radios; only the wealthy city dwellers could afford them. Villagers, if they wanted to listen to the radio, had to congregate at central meeting places, such as government buildings, social clubs, and church centers. Today just about every family in Zambia can afford a radio, especially the universally popular transistor, indicating the rapid changes that have taken place.

* Reprinted from pp. 235-46 in *Copper Town: Changing Africa*, by Hortense Powdermaker. Copyright © 1962 by Hortense Powdermaker. By permission of Harper & Row, Publishers.

Zambia has two radio stations, one in Lusaka, the capital, and one in Kitwe, the largest city of the Copperbelt. Programs, which run from 6 A.M. to 11 P.M., are broadcast in English, the official language of Zambia, and in six local languages.

Television also has appeared on the scene. Two stations—in Lusaka and Kitwe—broadcast daily from 4 to 11 P.M. At present, reception is limited to the cities, and only the wealthiest reisdents can afford the expensive sets. There is little doubt, however, that television will spread as a natural consequence of economic development. In the meantime, radio is the most important means of mass communication.

As you read "Listening to the Radio," Part I, think of these questions:

What are the favorite radio programs in the Copperbelt?

What do these programs indicate about the people?]

MUSIC AND SONGS

It is not surprising in view of the traditional enjoyment of music that all the radio audience listened to and enjoyed the musical programs and that approximately half the listeners preferred them. These programs were somewhat more popular among women and the uneducated, but the difference was not significant. Songs were diverse: modern, traditional, cowboy, "jive" songs, Christian hymns. Modern songs were concerned with love, sex, town and rural wives, "good-time" girls, the loneliness of men away from home, joys and dangers of town life, and other choices open to townsmen. Although only a few of the songs expressed the feelings of women, they too enjoyed them. Listeners said the songs

helped them; in most songs the listeners were hearing about themselves.

The majority of radio listeners on the mine township said they preferred modern songs and music. But this did not mean European music. The music was often traditional or an altered traditional form, although the singer was accompanied by a modern guitar. The words were in a vernacular language. One who liked the new music said:

> I like music best. I enjoy African songs, for I understand the language. I like the songs of Nkhata for two reasons: First, because they are composed of words which are full of meanings; and secondly, I like the guitar-playing. I also enjoy the American music made by cowboys. European music is abominable to me, because it has no life in it. It is slow and dull. Europeans sing as if they are crying.

A minority resented the innovations. One man said:

> I like the typical Bemba songs best, because they remind me of Bembaland [a village in Zambia]. I like all kinds of typical Bemba music. I do not like very much the songs by Nkhata, because they are too modern, although Bemba words are used. He even uses a guitar when our forefathers had no guitar. It is merely spoiling the Bemba music, because now many people like his songs, which are half English and half Bemba. And these people do not like typical old songs. I do not say Nkhata's songs are bad; they are good but they are too English in style. I would suggest that he use English words in them instead of Bemba.

Still others liked both modern and traditional songs. A woman said:

> I like best the African tribal music and more especially the Kunda music [she belonged to the Kunda tribe of

A transistor radio brings the outside world to a group of villagers in Senegal.

Zambia]. When this is on the program, I forget I am in Luanshya and think I am in the rural. Apart from the old songs, I like Alec Nkhata's songs which I think are the leading songs in Northern Rhodesia [the pre-independence name of Zambia] as far as modern music is concerned. The variety pleases me.

Others cared only for jive music. One of these said: "Give me only jive music"; and his favorite . . . song was:

Wa Wa, baby
Oh, baby
I wanna sing
Oh, baby
I wanna jive
I wanna jive
Day and night

With you
Wa Wa baby
Oh, baby
I wanna jive
Day and night!

Over and over again, we heard: "I forget all about sad things when music is on." "What are these sad things?" we asked; and a typical answer was, "I forget all about death and my relatives who died. When there is no music, one thinks of relatives who died and in so doing, he, too, will get very thin and may die also which is not a good thing. Let us all be refreshed with music, so that we don't think of death."

Yet some of the songs remembered by listeners were sad and about death. The refrain in one was:

I shall die where I wander
O Mother, O Mother
I shall die where I wander.

Comment of a man: "I like this song because I come from far away to work for money. Now I do not think about returning home, and I have found my home in this place. While seeking a fortune here, I may die. I feel that I shall die away from home since I am growing old now. . . ."

Other songs concerned with death showed the influence of Christianity. One was:

Friends, we are visitors on earth!
Let us always remember that death is at hand.
Let's not forget our Creator, maker of Heaven and earth,
Who gave us the world.
Let's magnify the Lord!

The world is like a bone
From which you gnaw a little bit.
You will die and leave the world.
Therefore, men and you women, let's not forget!
Let's remember we will be there on Judgment Day!

Everyone will receive punishment
According to his wrongdoing
There will be the reward for wrongdoers on earth
The poultry farmer looks after the life of his chickens.
So are our lives. We are looked after by God!

Christian hymns were likewise heard and their meanings considered. A man repeated the text of "Abide with Me" and said: "I sing this hymn in the evening when I am going to bed. Always I feel God should be near me in everything I do, everything I think about, and in everything I say, so that when I die, I may go to Paradise and not to Hell, where I would be in everlasting fires."

There may be a number of reasons for the concern with death in songs. Anxiety about death, particularly death from witchcraft, existed in tribal society and still persists. On the Copperbelt, there was also the fear of dying away from one's home and kindred, which is hard for most people to accept and particularly hard for Africans, who have been so closely tied to their land and to living and dead kindred. It is also possible that Christianity, which adds the fear of Hell and does not take away the fear of witchcraft, may increase anxiety about death. Then, too, death is a much more frequent occurrence on a township of thirty thousand Africans than in a small village; frequent funeral processions winding their way through the township could increase anxiety. I have also another hypothesis: that the generalized anxiety concerning

the possible loss of land to Europeans was not unrelated to the anxiety about death, for land was and is symbolic of fertility and life.

Another sad theme was the loneliness of men away from home. A popular song was:

> I try to find you, mother
> But I cannot see you.
> I came outside the house.
> I couldn't see you.
> Sorrow, sorrow. Because I have not seen you.
>
> I have got your picture but it doesn't speak.
> I have got your picture but it doesn't speak.
> If it would have been speaking
> Today I would have been too happy!

Many other popular songs were concerned with town and rural wives, love, and sex.

> Goodbye my love, I am going away
> From where I came.
> I am tired of waiting for you to change your habits.
> You will die alone.
> Do not forget your responsibility over children.
> Although I am going away, I will give you help
> In all your difficulties.
> You have wronged me by asking for a lot of money
> Which I, the unfortunate, cannot afford.

A typical comment: "I like this song because it teaches us that if you marry a town girl, even if you stay with her for

two years, you will divorce each other, because most of them are only after money and not real marriage. If a man is not careful, he is left bankrupt."

Some young men are not wise.
When they see a *Kapenta*
They put all their attention to her.
They forget their houses.
That is very saddening.
They start speaking in English.

"Hulla, Mama, the Beautiful One,
Come live with me in town.
You will be very fat, you girl,,
If you live with me.
You're gonna get bread and butter.
I have everything.

"There are plenty new looks.
You'll have so many dresses
You'll be changing clothes all day.
In the morning you will eat
Coffee, *toshta* [toast], and butter.
When we two appear in public
Young men will be shaking
Because of your beautiful clothes."

Kapenta is the name given to a woman who paints her lips red like a European. She is one of the town good-time girls. This song was regarded as a warning to men not to spend all their money on good-time girls.

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If you want to choose a girl for a wife
You better wait for the month of June*
This is the time you will choose a clean girl
Because some bathe in hot season only,
But when it is cold, in June, they stop!

* * *

What a world!
I was surprised when a young townsman married me.
And after only six days,
He said he did not want me any more
Because I had shamed him
In the presence of his people.
Then I begged, "No, no, my love,
I'm new to married life
Give me a chance to remain with you
Only another six months."
"No," said the man,
"I asked you to make tea,
But—surprise!
You cooked the leaves like vegetables
And poured on groundnuts like gravy.
I did not know village women were so ignorant.
You must go back to your house.
Here, take this ticket. It is ready.
The bus is waiting for you there!"

This song, by Nkhata, indicates that all is not necessarily well if a man goes home to the village for a rural bride. The village girl may be awkward in her new surroundings and shame her husband. . . .

* June is in the Zambian winter.

We are the smart men about town.
We eat from tables.
We are the smart men about town.
We've got the girls.
We are the smart men about town.
We put on shoes.
We are the smart men about town.
We look like teachers.
We are the smart men about town.
Wonderful wires stretch into our houses.
We are the smart men about town.
We have electric lights and tin roofs.
Now come and see what hell-of-a-fellows we are!

[The last song was] among the lusty, boasting ones about town life.

Songs with traditional themes were much less popular on this township than those with modern themes and were remembered only infrequently. One of the few was:

When Maiwaso catches the locusts
She does not give some to her friends.
Hm . . . hm . . . hm . . .
The locusts will mourn for you!

Comment: "It is true that if a person is very stingy he cannot be popular to his friends, and the time will come when he will fall ill, and not many will feel sad with him. That also happens if he dies; there will not be many people at his funeral, and that is not good at all. Even if you have little, you should share some with your friends." Traditional hospitality was still a much prized value among these Copperbelt Africans.

The songs express well the ambivalences felt by the men in their new situation. Men want the new town wives who ape the looks and clothes of the European women, and who are supposedly "champions" in a strong sex life. Men boast that they have these women. Yet they complain that the same women leave them bankrupt. They also yearn for the supposedly unspoiled rural women, now somewhat romanticized. Yet they are shamed by her awkwardness in the ways of town life. The romantic yearning for one woman exists side by side with the desire for good-time girls. . . .

A major problem for tribal peoples becoming modern is that for the first time they are faced with many choices. Traditional-minded elders who disapproved of new town customs could not give guidance. The songs offered advice to urban young men faced with the alternatives and gave them the comfort of knowing that their temptations and problems were not unique.

"REQUEST"

The second most popular program according to our survey was "Request." Twenty-seven per cent of the listeners preferred it, and almost all the listeners heard it with enjoyment. This personal program consisted of messages sent to and from individuals in various towns and villages. It gave news of births and deaths, engagements and marriages, the new address of a man changing his place of work, and other greetings of significance. Each message was accompanied by the sender's favorite song record. Listeners said they liked this program because it was "quicker than a letter" and brought news and "good greetings from people who are far away from me." They also spoke of enjoying the songs which "I hear with the messages."

Listening to the Radio

PART II

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Part I of "Listening to the Radio" illustrates the importance of the radio in the *personal* lives of the residents of the Copperbelt. The most popular programs dealt with such intimate concerns as romance, marriage, religion, ties to the village, and the dangers of city life. But there are other and perhaps larger issues at stake. What, for example, is the role of the radio in *social* terms? What effect will the radio have on society and on the nation?

All groups, whether large or small, rely on communication to preserve (or create) their unity. Even a family, if it did not communicate, if its members had no contact with one another, would cease to be a family. The same is true of any group, whether it is a primary group, such as a clan, or a secondary group, such as a social club. Members of a group have to be bound together through communication; otherwise they have no way of sharing common ideas and interests. And without common interests they would not be a group.

In traditional Africa, communication was direct and personal, conducted usually by word of mouth. Groups were small and the members lived in the same area. Families,

clans, and even tribes had little trouble in communicating; hence they remained united. They had what is known as a *folk society.*

But what happens when these groups break up and members move to other parts of the country? Do they still communicate with the old groups, and if so, how? How do they communicate with the new groups that form? As we saw in "Life in the Copperbelt," voluntary associations such as labor unions, political parties, and finally the nation itself replace the older involuntary associations. But how does a nation communicate when millions of people living hundreds of miles apart are involved? In other words, how do people develop a sense of belonging when a *folk society* becomes a *mass society?*

The answer, of course, is through the mass media of communication. People feel united when they have common interests, but they have to know that they share these interests. This is where the radio comes in.

The second part of "Listening to the Radio" indicates how the radio provides mass communication.

As you read this selection, keep these questions in mind:

Why did the listeners like news programs?

How can mass communication change society?]

A new generation—What effect will mass communication have on Nigerian youngsters, here shown watching closed-circuit educational TV? How will they differ from their parents?

NEWS

News was impersonal, but gave the listeners some sense of reassurance, of predictability, and even control. "I like the news so that we may know what is going on within our country and in the world." . . . To know the news from far and near and to know it with the miraculous speed of radio gave the listeners a sense of participation in the near and far worlds. . . . Knowing the news reduces the imagined fears of the unknown. Then, too, radio news not only lessened the ignorance of illiterate listeners but also reduced the social distance between them and those who could read. One man who had never been to school said: "Since I cannot read and collect information from newspapers to know what is happening in

our country, I use my ears and listen to the radio. So I do not remain ignorant of the things my friends who can read may be talking about.". . .

Although the adults on the Copperbelt were now part of a larger society, many still had close ties to their rural districts. They were eager to hear of progress there and of local events, trivial and important. These included reports about activities of chiefs, agricultural developments, schools being built, passes for mothers to visit sons on the mine, death of an important person in the rural district, a lion getting in the way of a bus. Over and over again, listeners expressed their pleasure in hearing news from their home districts:

> I bought a radio so that I could listen and hear all that is being said in Bemba from the different parts of the world, and especially from my home. I like to hear of things which have been improved or new things in my country such as dams, schools, and hospitals. Without any time wasted, the whole world becomes aware of such news.

Urban news was about politics, African trade unions, sports, movement of European government officials, regulations and laws affecting Africans, and other town events. News of new regulations or laws often gave a feeling of security to listeners. An uneducated man said:

> I like the Northern Rhodesian [i.e., Zambian] news best. I heard from the radio an announcement concerning a new law for Northern Rhodesia. It said that there was to be a light on a bicycle when moving at night. Any offender will be dealt with accordingly. I was one of those people who had no light on their bicycle. So that when I heard that, the following morning I went to buy my light. I was very pleased, because had I not been attentive, I should have been the victim of that law.

Reactions to much of the news, particularly any considered political, were clearly influenced by the pre-existing attitudes of the listeners. Those who had gone as far as Standard IV [fourth grade] or further were interested in political news, and they were primarily concerned with political progress for Africans and with gaining political equality with Europeans. One of them said:

> I do not like news such as a lion killed a cow at Mkushi or that there was a fight at Mufilira and so forth, because they do not tell me how my country is improving. I was pleased to hear three weeks ago that Mr. Yamba was elected a member of the federal government. You see, long ago Africans were not allowed to speak for themselves, but now we can be found even in Parliament. We ought to speak for ourselves. God gave us minds to think for ourselves.

News of the movements of European officials in the Federation was remembered quite frequently, but always with hostility or indifference, no matter what the news about them was. "They are not our relatives," "They have done us no good," or "They have brought the Federation, which is bad for us." A longer comment was:

> I heard that the Governor was going to England . . . and that a new Governor was coming to take his place. It did not make any difference to me, since they are only Europeans who favor their fellow Europeans. Had they said that Harry Nkumbula, president of the African Congress, was going somewhere, I would be sorry, since he is trying to fight for my sake and my children. He does not want Europeans to take our land which God gave us.

Another listener to the same news item, a clerk, said, "The Governor was unfair in some cases by speaking against

Africans, especially the time they were talking about Federation. Sometimes he would say that we were not civilized, and that is not good." . . .

In making the original survey, I was surprised that even uneducated Africans were listening to the world news. Further interviews revealed that for many the motivation was to find out if a war was going on. For the Africans, a major advantage of the European conquest had been the cessation of intertribal warfare and slavery. But they experienced the last world war, and the older people remember the First World War; they had heard about the Korean War from the radio and they now have news about atomic bombs and other alarming events. The Africans were frightened about the possibility of another world war. Any news they connected with war was heard in the context of suspicions that Europeans had malevolent intentions of sending Africans to war. Typical comments from two uneducated men were:

> I like the news because I want to know what is happening in other places, whether there is war, and where it is taking place. I heard that Americans wanted to test the atomic bomb in a certain land and the British have agreed. I do not like such things because they are a source of war. Everyone is not happy during a war, and so it is not good. A lot of people are killed and things in the shops are expensive, because they are fewer and difficult to transport, since they are likely to be damaged on the way. If a war comes I will go to the rural and start hoeing, and then drink beer in the village with my friends. If war comes, I will not remain here in town.
>
> I feel that we have already been subjected by these Europeans, and we shall never be free. We have nothing to do with wars at the present time, since we do not rule any land. It is useless for us to go to war when we know that we shall not gain anything after the war is over. They

promise a lot of things when the war is on and when the war is over we do not see these things. In the last war they said that if Africans fight hard and we helped them to win, after the war we would be equal to Europeans. . . .

A contemplative African who was a good Christian regarded war as inevitable. He said:

War started when the world was very young, and it is now a thing the world cannot do without. People should fight when they do not agree. Even in the Bible, we read of the woman Deborah fighting against the Philistines, and there are more fights or wars in the Bible. Everyone should be prepared to fight, because we read even in Heaven there were wars. There was a war between the angels of God and the angels who followed Satan, the devil. And so how can we avoid wars here on earth?

The only favorable image of Europeans in connection with war was given by a man in his late forties, a clerk with Standard V [fifth grade] education, who had traveled around different parts of Africa. He said:

I used to like listening to the wireless during the last war, so that I could know how the war was getting on. I was much interested because that war concerned me, as I am in the hands of the British Empire and the war was between the British and the Germans. I thought that if the British won, it would be much better for us, but if the Germans won, it would have been very bad. You see, the British government is very good indeed, because it educates its Africans. When the Germans were ruling Tanganyika [now Tanzania], Africans were kept as slaves, and they were not educated at all. That is why Nyakyusa from Tanganyika look very backward, as far as the use of European things are concerned. If you ask anyone who was there during the rule of the Germans, he will tell you that they were kept like animals, and no education

> given to them. I say that the British government is the best because some of us now can do some good jobs like office work and can sleep in good houses. I was in Portuguese East Africa from 1927 to 1937, but the Africans there were not so good as I found them here. Nearly every African there wore torn clothes, and there was no education provided. People were worked like slaves and no African had a good job. So, from all this one can tell that the British government is the best.

Many reactions to news were unstructured but suggested a pleasant sense of being *au courant* [up to date]. For instance, an uneducated man reported his pleasure at hearing news of a football match, a blind man with deformed hands, a lion hunt, the Pope's illness, and a cold wave in Canada.

Some news was incorrectly remembered, or confused, or even imagined. Incorrect recall and the play of imagination are not unique to Africans; they are universal and not confined to radio listeners. Whether the recall of the news was correct or incorrect, structured or unstructured, the radio listeners, at the time of listening, felt more in control of their movements through knowing what was going on in villages and towns, hearing about new regulations, and getting other information which they considered important. Through the news, the listeners maintained ties to the rural areas and at the same time felt more a part of urban life; some extended their range of interest to places and people in other parts of Africa and in the world.

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*Tell Freedom**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The Republic of South Africa, on the southern tip of the continent, is the most urbanized country of sub-Saharan Africa. It has more cities and larger cities than any other black African state. Johannesburg, with a population of approximately 1,310,000, stands third in size on the entire continent, next to the Egyptian cities of Cairo and Alexandria. The other principal urban areas are Cape Town (817,000), Durban (690,000), Pretoria (448,000), Port Elizabeth (324,000), Germiston (222,000), and Bloemfontein (147,000).

This urban growth can be traced in part to the fact that South African mines have yielded the largest diamonds ever found, as well as the world's highest production of gold. This thriving mining industry, which also includes other resources, such as uranium, platinum, chrome, manganese, iron ore, and asbestos, not only led to the creation of cities and great wealth, but also stimulated the development of other industries.

European settlers made their way to the rich land of South Africa as early as the seventeenth century, at about the same time the Pilgrims came to America. Pioneers from Holland, Germany, France, and England came and stayed, attempting to create what might be called a little Europe. To a great extent they succeeded. Johannesburg, with its soaring sky-

* Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954, pp. 222-36. Copyright © 1954 by Peter Abrahams. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

scrapers and smoking factories, has all the marks of a European metropolis.

These settlers did not then and do not now consider themselves mere colonialists. Unlike most Europeans in other black African states (who took control in the nineteenth century and gave it up in the twentieth), the white South Africans regard themselves as full-fledged Africans, with as much right to control the land as the black majority. South Africa, then, is a special case.

To call South Africa special is perhaps an understatement. Not only do the whites have equal rights—they have *all* the rights. Not only do they control some of the land—they control *all* of it. The whites, who represent less than 20 per cent of the population, dominate the lives and destinies of the overwhelming (but impotent) majority. No blacks can vote. No blacks can hold political office. No blacks can form opposition parties. No blacks can attend white universities or white hospitals. No blacks can earn the same pay as whites for the same job. In 1948 the government made this inequality official by adopting a policy of *apartheid* (pronounced "apart-hate"), which means separateness. The government claims that *apartheid* simply means the separate development of the various races. In reality it represents the most systematic form of racial segregation in the world.

The population of South Africa, as estimated in 1967, breaks down this way:

Bantu	12,750,000	69%
White	3,563,000	19
Colored	1,859,000	9
Asian	561,000	3

Bantu refers to black South Africans; colored means mulatto or a mixture of white and black; and Asian refers to people from India. The whites, although treated as one group under *apartheid*, can actually be divided into two groups according to language and origin. About 60 per cent are descendents of Dutch, German, or French settlers; they speak a germanic language called Afrikaans and are called Afrikaners. The other 40 per cent, mostly of British origin, speak English.

Apartheid is designed to keep these four groups separated. Special reservations called Bantustans have been staked out for the Bantus. The white government hopes that eventually all blacks will live in the Bantustans and possibly become independent politically. In effect the white man is saying, "Go away, go away. You are causing problems. It's hard for a small minority to control a large majority." The black man will not go away, of course, but if he does the white man has made sure he won't take anything with him, for the Bantustans have no mines or major industry, and much of the land is too poor for efficient farming. About 87 per cent of the land in South Africa is reserved for whites only, including all the best agricultural land. In short, the government intends to keep all the wealth in the hands of the whites and give the rest to the majority.

Coloreds and Indians are considered more civilized than the blacks, so the government gives them a slightly higher status. They earn higher wages than the Africans, and they can vote (in some provinces), but only for white candidates and after meeting certain qualifications regarding education and income or property. The whites, of course, do not have to meet these qualifications; the blacks have no vote at all. The coloreds and Indians, then, although slightly better off than the blacks, are still victims of *apartheid*. The following news story, from the *New York Post* (Oct. 10, 1967), gives a vivid idea of what the difference between "white" and "colored" can mean to a man.

IN S. AFRICA, HOW WHITE IS WHITE?

by Gordon Lindsay

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (CDN)—A man who has lived as a white person for 60 years faces the prospect of spending the rest of his life as a colored (mulatto) with all the frustrations enforced by the government policy of apartheid.

William Walker wept after his recent appeal against classification as a colored was dismissed in the Pretoria Supreme Court.

It did not take long to smash the world of the gray-haired, Afrikaans-speaking Walker. Only a glance was necessary.

The judge said the race classification board had decided Walker did not look "obviously white."

The most important requirement for white status is that "someone must be obviously white. It must be plain to see."

Walker, who will appeal, has 10 children. Three of his daughters are married to white men, two of them in South Africa. One, with two "white children," lives in a white suburb in Pretoria.

Another lives in Johannesburg and also has two "white" children. The third lives in Gaberones, Botswana. She has no children.

"And," said Walker, "a young white man regularly visits one of my other daughters."

Tragic Impact

If Walker's final appeal fails, tragedy will hit the three married daughters and their white husbands. They will automatically be declared colored. (The white husbands, because they married a "colored," would be classified as colored. They could appeal and be reclassified as white, but then they would be "living in sin"—across the color line.)

The only way for them to escape this fate would be to leave the country.

For three years the Walkers have lived in the "white" Pretoria suburb of East Lynne.

The trouble started when neighbors decided the Walkers did not look white enough. Eighty signed a petition calling for investigation.

Walker, who arrived in Pretoria from Botswana five years ago, said:

"I can't go and stay with coloreds. I've always stayed in white areas. My parents were white, and I was brought up as a white."

Walker works for the Public Works Dept.—as a white man. Under the reclassification he will take another job as a colored man at less pay.

This is a good example of the absurd results of *apartheid.* What difference should it make what William Walker is called? Will he change just because his classification is changed? How about all those white people who treated him as a white man for sixty years? What are they going to do now—hang their heads in shame? stop talking to him? How about his close friends? Will they ignore him now?

It's interesting that the world's first heart transplant, conducted in South Africa, involved putting a colored man's heart into the chest of a white man, Dr. Philip Blaiberg. But how can *apartheid* allow a colored heart to pump white blood? Isn't that integration? A colored man can't live next door to a white man, but he can live inside the other's body. Strange logic. If nothing else, Dr. Blaiberg should have been reclassified as colored. After all, the heart is the most important organ in the body. But apparently hearts don't count in South Africa, so long as one looks "obviously white."

As absurd as this situation is, it represents reality for 15 million nonwhites in South Africa. But hope dies hard in the human heart, no matter what color the skin. In the following selection, you will meet a young colored boy from South Africa who, despite his disadvantaged upbringing, manages to get an education and eventually free himself from oppression. His name is Peter Abrahams, and in these excerpts from his autobiography, *Tell Freedom,* he recalls the excitement of discovering a new life at the Bantu Men's Social Center in Johannesburg. Born in Vrededorp, the slums of the city, son of an Ethiopian father and a colored mother from Cape Town, Abrahams went on to become one of Africa's most distinguished writers.

As a boy, he worked at various casual jobs and snatched a little schooling when he could. He worked his way to England at 20 as a stoker on a ship, and in London he began to make his living as a writer. He now lives in the West Indies, along with other exiles from his native South Africa.

The following episode from *Tell Freedom* tells of Abrahams' attempt to find a job. His Aunt Mattie had been jailed for brewing illegal beer, the profits of which were used to pay Peter's school fees. At the market where he carried groceries for white people, he met an African who directed him to the Bantu Men's Social Center for a position as secretary.

The Center was the congregating place for many educated South African blacks who could not join white clubs or go to cultural events and libraries reserved for the European population.

From Tribe to Town

As you read this selection, keep these questions in mind:

How did books change Peter Abrahams' life?

How does his experience relate to the black experience in America today?

How does the social club replace some of the functions of the traditional African family?]

I found the Bantu Men's Social Center on the outer rim of Johannesburg, on the way to Langlaagte and the white mountains of sand that towered beyond it. It was a huge building that stood on its own grounds. But for the huge sign on its front, I would have passed it by as just another European building.

I hesitated uncertainly on the pavement till two well-dressed black men speaking English passed me and went in. I followed them. There was a passage that widened into a rectangular hall. Doors led off to right and left. On the first door on the left was the word: "Secretary." The two men passed that and entered the second door on the left. I knocked on the door marked "Secretary." No one answered. Again. Still no answer. I heard voices and looked about me. To my right, a flight of stairs led to a first-floor landing. Two men were leaning against a balustrade, talking.

I called up to them: "Excuse me, please—"

"Yes, son?"

"I'm looking for Mr. Dubula, please."

"Try the office."

"I have. There's no answer."

"I should wait. Mr. Rathebe won't be long."

From the other side of the huge door that faced the passage

came a deep voice, touched with the velvet quality of organ notes, singing a familiar song.

The organ notes stopped. Another, lighter voice, without the magic quality of the first, sang the same words, tried to make them sound the same, but failed. Then the magnificent voice sang a little more of the song. And again the lighter voice repeated it. If only the lighter voice would leave the other alone! Others must have shared my feeling, for a man came out of the door where the two had gone in earlier. He pushed the great door open. I saw part of a huge hall.

"Hlubi, man!" the man called. "The fellows want to hear Robeson. Turn it up!"

"All right."

Black men appeared from everywhere and stood in silence.

That was a black man, one of us! I knew it. I needed no proof. The men about me, their faces, their bearing, carried all the proof. That was a black man! The voice of a black man!

The glorious voice stopped. The men went back to what they were doing. The moment that had given us a common identity was over. Robeson, the man had called him. A name to remember, that. I would find out about that man.

"Some voice, heh, son?" a man said to me.

"Yessir!"

"He's an American Negro," the man said, and moved away.

I followed him through the door where the greatest number went. It was a long room, spacious, and with big windows that let in light. At one end was a billiard table. Two men, in shirt-sleeves, played. At the other end were shelves filled with books. Comfortable settees were ranged about the room. Men sat reading or talking. Others watched the game. They all spoke English here.

I moved over to the bookshelves. I wanted to touch the books, but held back. Perhaps it was not permitted. Typed slips showed what each shelf held: novels, history, sociology, travel, Africana, political science, American Negro literature. . . . I stopped there. American Negro literature. The man had said Robeson was an American Negro. . . .

A man got up and came over. He ran his finger along the American Negro literature shelf and took out a book.

"Excuse me. Can I look at these?"

"Of course," he smiled.

I reached up and took out a fat, black book. *The Souls of Black Folk,* by W. E. B. Du Bois. I turned the pages. It spoke about people in a valley. And they were black, and dispossessed, and denied. I skimmed through the pages, anxious to take it all in. I read:

> For this much all men know: despite compromise, war, struggle, the Negro is not free.

"The Negro is not free." . . . I remembered those "Reserved for Europeans Only" signs; I remembered no white boys ever carried bags at the market or ran from the police; I remembered my long walks in the white sections of the city, and the lavatories, and the park benches, and the tearooms; . . . I remembered Aunt Mattie going to jail; I remembered spittle on my face. . . ." "The Negro is not free."

But why had I not thought of it myself? Now, having read the words, I knew that I had known this all along. But until now I had had no words to voice that knowledge. Du Bois's words had the impact of a revelation.

Elsewhere I read:

> I have seen a land right merry with sun, where children sing and rolling hills lie like passioned women wanton with harvest. And there in the King's Highway sat and sits a figure veiled and bowed, by which the traveler's

footsteps hasten as they go. On the tainted air broods fear. Three centuries' thought has been the raising and unveiling of that bowed human heart, and now behold a century new for the duty and the deed. The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.

I read on and found a reiteration:

The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

For all the thousands of miles, for all the ocean, between the land and people of whom he wrote and my land, Du Bois might have been writing about my land and people. The mood and feeling he described were native to me. I recognized the people as those among whom I lived. The only difference was that there was no laughter in this book. Here, in our land, in the midst of our miseries, we had moments of laughter, moments of playing. Though like us in every other respect, the Negroes in *The Souls of Black Folk* seemed very solemn, without laughter. But for all that, Du Bois had given me a key to the understanding of my world. The Negro is not free. . . .

I replaced the book and reached for others. There was *Up from Slavery; Along This Way,* by Weldon Johnson; a slim volume called *The Black Christ;* a fat volume called *The New Negro.* I turned the pages of *The New Negro.* These poems and stories were written by Negroes! Something burst deep inside me. The world could never again belong to white people only! Never again!

I took *The New Negro* to a chair. I turned the pages. . . .

[In "The Dark Tower" I read:]

"We shall not always plant while others reap. . . ."

"Are you the young man who's been looking for me?"

For a while I stared foolishly at the neat little man who stood over my chair.

"My name's Rathebe."

"Yessir!" I shut the book and jumped up.

"Well, young man?"

"I'm looking for Mr. Dabula, please."

"Your name?"

"Peter Abrahams."

"What's it about?"

"A job. I met a gentleman who said he'd phone."

"That's right. Mr. Dabula's expecting you. Go up the stairs and it's the first door on your right."

I replaced the book and followed Rathebe out of the room. He entered the door marked "Secretary." I climbed up the stairs. The voice of the man called Hlubi reached me from the big hall. He was practicing without Robeson now.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they nailed him on the cross?

I knocked on the door.

"Come in!"

I went into a small office. A young man sat at a desk. In front of him was a typewriter with a sheet half filled with writing. The young man was small and chubby—not much taller than myself, but well filled out. He had a round face, smooth and dark brown. His forehead was large, large enough to give the impression that his hair receded. His hair, a shade less uncontrollably kinked than mine, was cut short and very well groomed. He gave the impression of quiet freshness. He studied me with brown eyes that suggested gentleness. Indeed, this gentleness of the eyes seemed a

thing common to all the men I had seen at the Bantu Men's Social Center that afternoon. It was almost as if I had met a new kind of black person.

"Mr. Dabula?"

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"I met a gentleman who said . . ."

"Ah! You're the young man from the market." His eyes ran over my neat and proper dress. "I expected . . ."

I grinned and helped him out. "I had a proper scrub. Nearly didn't know myself."

"Sit down. . . . You've really been a market boy?"

"Yes."

His face creased into a smile.

"Well, now, about the job." He explained:

This was the office of the black section of the Boy Scout movement. In South Africa even this international organization for cooperation, manliness, and understanding was run on segregation lines. The white scouts had one organization, the blacks another, and the Coloreds yet another. As in all other spheres, there was no intermingling between black and white. The black scouts were called Pathfinders. And this little office was their headquarters.

He outlined my tasks as office-boy. I would have to file letters and keep the files in order. I would have to deal with the orders for scout badges, whistles, lanyards [ropes], hats, and belts; make them up into parcels, make out the invoices, and post the parcels. My wage would be ten shillings a week.

"What's your writing like?"

I did a specimen for him.

"Atrocious," he grinned. "All right. Start in the morning."

I went down to the library and my newly discovered *New Negro.*

A miner holds a palmful of diamonds. South Africa continues to deprive the African of the fruits of his labor and of his land. Free Africa, however, has halted the tide of exploitation.

We shall not always plant while others reap
The golden increment of bursting fruit,
Not always countenance, abject and mute,
That lesser men should hold their brothers cheap;
Not everlastingly while others sleep
Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute,
Not always bend to some more subtle brute;
We were not made eternally to weep.

A man called Countee Cullen said that to me. And this man loved John Keats in a way I understood.

A man named Langston Hughes said:

I'm looking for a house
In the world
Where the white shadows
Will not fall.

Then he checked me with:

> There is no such house,
> Dark brother,
> No such house
> At all.

There were many others. Stirling Brown wrote with the authority of a man who had had a long talk with history. Claude McKay stirred me to aggressive pride:

> Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
> Though far outnumbered let us still be brave,
> And for their blows deal one death-blow!
> What though before us lies the open grave?
> Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
> Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

I could go out and spit in a white man's face! . . . Fortunately, the mood passed long before I met a white man.

Georgia Douglas Johnson stirred me to pride in the darkness of my mother and sister; and Jean Toomer:

> Caroling softly souls of slavery,
> What they were, and what they are to me,
> Caroling softly souls of slavery,

stirred me to the verge of tears.

In the months that followed, I spent nearly all my spare time in the library of the Bantu Men's Social Center. I read every one of the books on the shelf marked American Negro literature. I became a nationalist, a color nationalist, through the writings of men and women who lived a world away from me. To them I owe a great debt for crystallizing my vague yearnings to write and for showing me the long dream was attainable.

My mother [and sisters] came from Vrededorp . . . and we had a little family party. I told them about my job and about my discovery of American Negro literature. I tried to tell them what it meant to me. But they were not really interested. America and Harlem were at the other end of the world. And in Colored terminology Negroes were black people whom both whites and Coloreds called Natives in their polite moments. I gave up my attempts, sat back, and listened. They talked happily about the little rounds of their days. I realized, quite suddenly, that I was rapidly moving out of this Colored world of mine, out of the reach of even my dear mother and sister. I saw them with the objective eyes of a stranger. My mother touched my arm.

"You're growing up fast, Lee. . . ."

I looked into her eyes. Her lips curved in understanding. She had caught my thought. *She* was still with me.

A world of activity opened to me. I joined the Pathfinders, attended their meetings, and read all the literature on Scouting. I learned the very useful things each scout knew.

In three weeks I had saved up enough to buy a ten-shilling postal order. The *Bantu World* carried a weekly advertisement of a correspondence school. The rate was ten shillings a month. I took their "General Education" course. Also in the *Bantu World* I saw an illustrated offer of ten beautifully bound volumes entitled *Practical Knowledge for All,* which could be had on easy terms. I sent off for these.

Often I brought my lessons to the library of the Bantu Men's Social Center. The atmosphere there was more conducive to learning than at home. Also, there were usually others studying. Some, like myself, had correspondence courses. Others, more advanced, studied independently. And if I got stuck I could always find someone to help me out.

Sometimes, of an evening, I listened to the debates of the Social Center's Debating Society. Sometimes I went into the big hall and watched men rehearsing their songs and dances. Almost every evening after the day's work, my boss, Peter Dabula, went into Rathebe's office downstairs. Others would be there and they would sit talking. I wormed my way into these sessions and became a silent, unobtrusive listener.

Rathebe talked fascinatingly about his travels. He had been to England and America. And we never tired of hearing him tell of his experiences. In England he had lived in the homes of white people, had sat at table with them! England had no color bar. A man could go where he pleased when he pleased. A man was just a man. Of course, people had looked. He was different. But there was no color bar. And he had met Negroes living in England. They had made it their home. Why, the great Paul Robeson lived there!

But Harlem! Harlem . . . the city of Negroes. A city within a city; not a suburb, not a location, not a slum area, a city. . . . We hung on his words; words spoken in an easy, subdued manner stirred our hearts and minds and led us on to wild dreams.

So many questions stirred in me; so many things I wanted to know, but I dared not ask lest they turn me out. They had forgotten my presence. Best leave it like that.

Once one of Rathebe's listeners was moved to exclaim: "Freedom!"

Rathebe's words gave us some slight yardstick with which to attempt understanding of the meaning of freedom. And, to a man, his audience dreamed of one day leaving this land. They all expressed a desire to go to America.

America held the promise. America was the land of hope and opportunity.

My mind was divided. The call of America's limitless

opportunities was strong. The call of Harlem, Negro colleges, and the "New Negro" writers was compelling. But Charles Lamb, John Keats, Shelley, and the glorious host they led made a counter call. And my mind's eye saw a peaceful land that offered peace to a poet.

> Ye who have yearn'd
> With too much passion, will there stay and pity,
> For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
> Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
> By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
> And then the forest told it in a dream
> To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
> A poet caught as he was journeying
> To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling
> His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
> And after, straight in that inspired place
> He sang the story up into the air,
> Giving it universal freedom.

So as the others expressed their dreams of getting to America, I tried to take stock of the two forces that pulled me, first this way, then that. And it seemed that America had more to offer me as a black man. If the American Negro was not free, he was at least free to give voice to his unfreedom. And there was a promise for me in the very fact that so many of them had risen to high eminence.

Yet England, holding out no offer, not even the comfort of being among my own kind, could counter that call because men now dead had once crossed its heaths and walked its lanes quietly, unhurriedly, and had sung with such beauty that their songs had pierced the heart of a black boy a world away, and in another time.

I decided. I would go to England one day. Perhaps I would go to America afterwards, but I would go to England first. I would go there because the dead men who called were, for me, more alive than the most vitally living. In my heart I knew my going there would be in the nature of a pilgrimage.

But Harlem! A Negro city! Imagine Countee Cullen walking down a street and meeting Langston Hughes! And then imagine Paul Robeson joining them! And Du Bois! And Stirling Brown. . . . Go on! Chuck in Pushkin too! And then let them talk! Imagine. . . .

One day I discovered there were early-morning gym classes at the Social Center. I got up earlier and joined these before starting my day's work. I was easily the skinniest runt in the class and became body-conscious. I began to read the "Are you a man or a mouse?" ads in the *Bantu World*. I came across an offer by Charles Atlas to make a "he-man" out of me if only I would give him a seven-day trial. I wrote to Mr. Atlas's South African address. I told him I wanted to be turned into a "he-man" by his Dynamic Tension course. The snag was that I could not at present stretch my money to meet his course. I explained my budget:

2s. 6d. a week was set aside for my correspondence course;
2s. 6d. a week to pay off the price of the ten volumes;
2s. 6d. went . . . for my keep;
2s. 6d. for clothing that I needed badly, and pocket money.

But I promised to set 2s. 6d. aside to pay for my "he-man" body as soon as I had finished paying for the books. I had no reply from Mr. Atlas.

I wrote to another body-building expert, Mr. George F.

Jowitt. He replied, explaining in a kindly letter that he could not build up my body on credit and that all I really needed I could do by myself. He suggested a lot of fresh air and exercise.

To aid the fresh air and exercise, I later borrowed ten shillings from my savings for clothes and spent it on a large-size bottle of "Vikelp" tablets. These were advertised as made up of precious life-giving minerals from the bed of the seas. They were guaranteed to put "pounds of solid, healthy flesh" on my body. I spent a lot of pennies weighing myself. In three months I actually put on two pounds in weight!

Periodically, there were dances at the Center, usually on Saturday nights. Young men brought their wives or girl friends. I attended some of these but never worked up the courage to ask a young woman to dance. Instead, I took lessons . . . at home. Even these, however, did not give me the needed confidence to approach a strange young woman. Even my new long trousers, moral supports in everything else, could not support me to the point of asking to dance with a young woman.

But my life was full, and Vrededorp, the market, the tinsmithy, all seemed to belong to another lifetime, in another world.

Peter Dabula responded to my lust for learning and helped me to learn to type. Because everyone at the Social Center spoke English, it became a habit with me. I thought in English. It took the place of Afrikaans as my first language. My range of words expanded, and with it the range of my thoughts. All my days and half my nights were crammed with learning, working, watching, listening, and the long, long dreams of youth.

Like Peter Abrahams, this young African discovers the world through books.

Prosperity and poverty coexist in Johannesburg. The picture above shows typical apartment houses for middle-class whites; the one below shows Sophiatown, the former black ghetto of Johannesburg. Sophiatown was demolished a few years ago and the residents were forcibly removed. The area shown here, however, was not evacuated, because it is not near a white residential area.

Let Me See Your Pass, Kaffir *

PART I

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: One way in which the South African government enforces *apartheid* is through an elaborate pass system. Nonwhites need passes to settle, to travel, to work, and to identify themselves whenever they go into white areas, which means most of the country. This system enables the government to keep track of everyone's activities; it keeps the races separated, and it prevents the nonwhites from organizing protest movements.

Peter Abrahams describes the pass system in this way:

> When Jim [who is black] left his Pedi village in the northern Transvaal he had to go to the nearest police station or Native Affairs Department. There he got a *Trek Pass.* This permitted him to make the journey to Johannesberg. On reaching the city he got an *Identification Pass* and a *Six-Day Special Pass.* He paid two shillings each month for the Identification Pass. The Six-Day Special was his protection while he looked for work. He did not go to the pass office to renew his Six-Day Special. He was picked up on the eighth day and spent two weeks in jail as a vagrant. That taught him tc go to the pass office regularly.
>
> He found his first job in a suburb of the city. He got a *Monthly Pass,* regarded as his contract of service. Like all houseboys, he got part of the weekend off. Like others, he wanted to visit places like Vrededorp and Malay Camp,

* Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History,* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963, pp. 56-69. Copyright © by Thames & Hudson. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

> . . . and get to know the life of the city. But these places were outside the district in which he was registered. To go there without fear of being picked up, he got a *Traveling Pass.* When he got to know black people of the city and wanted to visit them on his Sunday off, he got a *Day Special Pass* from his employer, made the journey, and got a *Location Visitor's Pass* from the superintendent of the location where his friends lived. Armed with these two, he could enter the location freely. He had decided, after a time, to lodge with his friends at the location. His employer had agreed. The local superintendent had contacted the pass office. Except for that one short spell in jail his record was clear. The superintendent had agreed. He had got his *Lodger's Permit* and moved in.
>
> He had met a woman, a nice young one, good to look at—one who could laugh and who had reminded him of the one he had left in his village. It had been a good thing. They had gone out at night. To walk without fear after nine at night he had to have a *Night Special Pass.* (Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954, p. 209.)

"Let Me See Your Pass, *Kaffir*" presents a vivid description of the pass system in operation. The setting is Sophiatown, a squalid black ghetto of Johannesburg. Sophiatown has since been condemned and demolished; the residents have been forcibly removed and resettled. But the human condition has not changed; the pass system, along with other repressive measures, continues to thwart any attempt at human dignity.

Bloke Modisane, a black, was born and educated in South Africa. His autobiography, *Blame Me on History,* from which this selection is taken, describes the violent and humiliating conditions in which the black man (*kaffir*) of South Africa must live. As the book jacket suggests, this is "a tortured, moving story, torn from the author's own wounds."

As you read "Let Me See Your Pass, *Kaffir,*" think of these questions:

How does *apartheid* affect Bloke Modisane's life?

How is he forced to behave because of it?

Why is there so much violence in Sophiatown?]

The shadow of apartheid spreads long over my life, I have to live with it, to come to terms with its reality, and to arrange myself under the will of its authority. I have to be sane, calculating, and ruthless in order to survive; I was sane that night as I walked from Lower Houghton to Sophiatown against curfew regulations in a restricted area for blacks. I realized my position and planned my strategy accordingly.

I had been confronted in the servant's quarters of a girlfriend working as a domestic servant in Lower Houghton; she had smuggled me into her room, supposedly against the ruling of the white master. It was arranged for me to arrive during dinner, and whilst the white family was at the meal Esther came out through the kitchen door and signaled me through the back gate, past the refuse bins along a path lined with flowerbeds.

"Take off your shoes," Esther whispered, "you'll trample the flowers of the missis."

I removed my shoes, tippytoeing on, an impatient, panting open-eye of anticipation; I walked against an obstacle.

"Sh," she said, ushering me into her room.

An hour later she brought me a bowl of soup, then a meat dish, steam pudding, and coffee, all served in attractive china; it was luxury we called "dog's meat," from the stories told around the locations [the areas where non-whites are forced to live] that kitchen girls served their boyfriends dishes prepared from the rations for the dogs, which were fed more nutritiously than the children of the locations. And although some white employers pretended not to notice the traffic in the backyards, they objected to their best china being used by Natives; I have worked for firms where separate cups were used by whites and blacks, and I have seen a white typist break her own cup on the allegation that it had been used by

a Native. A competent cook may be mollycoddled by being permitted to keep a "husband" in the backyard, but this is never extended to include the use of the china; Esther probably intended to impress me. . . .

[When I finally left] it was after midnight, I did not have a Special Pass, Native public transport had stopped three hours ago. My pride had been hurt and I was too snobbish to lock myself in the servant's outdoor lavatory and spend the night there; I determined to brave the police and the *tsotsis* [hoodlums], to walk the nine miles to Sophiatown. Two hours later, on the Jan Smuts Avenue, I was surprised by a police block.

"Nag Pass, kaffir," the white constable said, shining a torch in my face. "Night Special."

I pulled my hat off and came to military attention; I squeezed a sob into my voice, shook my body with fear, trembling before the authority confronting me.

"My *baas* [master], my crown," I said, in my textbook Afrikaans. "I have a School Pass, my *baas.*"

"Skool kinders is almal aan die slaap" [All the school children are asleep], he said.

"Yes, my *baasie,*" I said, "I was very stupid tonight, I was nearly led into the ways of the devil. This *kaffir meid* [maid], my *baas,* was trying to trick me into sleeping in her room, but I know it is against the law, my *baasie;* so I said to her: the law says I must not sleep on the property of the white master. I know I didn't have a Special Pass, but I said to myself, this is wrong, you must go. This is the truth, my *baasie.*"

"Jy's 'n goei kaffir" [You're a good Negro], he said, becoming sickeningly paternal, "a very good *kaffir.* Let's see your Pass—you must be careful, these *kaffir* women are bad,

very bad. You must learn good at school and be a good Native; don't run after these bad women and don't mix with the troublemakers."

"*Hier is dit,* my *baas,*" I said, "the Pass."

"*Ek sien*" [I see], he said, looking at the pass under the torch light. "Now, tell the *baas* where you're going?"

"Sophiatown, my *baas,*" I said, "I'm very sorry to be out so late, my *baas;* it's this *kaffir meid,* my *baas,* very bad; she delay me until it's too late for the busses, then she says I must sleep, but I say no, it's wrong; also I see, my *baas,* the clothes of a man, and I say to myself, trouble; but she try to stop me, say it belong to her brother, but I say she lie and I go home."

"You must watch these *meide,*" the constable said, with fatherly concern. "You watch out for them, they're the devil's work; now, listen here, *weg is jy* [scram], go on with you."

"*Baie, dankie, baasie*" [Thank you very much, Master], I said, bowing my head several times, "thank you very much, my *baasie.*"

"Don't let me catch you again," he said, playfully kicking my bottom, but there was enough power behind it to make it playfully brutal.

"Thank you, my *baasie.*"

I was rubbing my hands over the spot where I was kicked, hopping forward and pretending a playful pain, all to the amusement of the white police constable and his African aides. Bloody swine, I mumbled through the laughing and the clowning. Two police blocks later, played with the same obsequiousness, I arrived home.

Violence exists in our day-to-day group relationships, the expression of the public conscience; it is contained in the law, the instrument of maintaining law and order. Our aggression

is totally integrated, completely multiracial. The African directs his aggression perhaps more viciously against his own group, particularly against the more successful Africans who are resented for being successful. The public image of South Africa is white, and white is the standard of civilization; what is not white is black, and black is the badge of ignorance and savagery, and the [South] African searching for acceptance surrounds himself with the symbols and the values of white civilization; thus the successful African is immediately identified with white.

Violence and death walk abroad in Sophiatown, striking out in revenge or for thrills or caprice; I have lived in my room trembling with fear, wondering when it would be my turn, sweating away the minutes whilst somebody was screaming for help, shouting against the violence which was claiming for death another victim. The screams would mount to a final resounding peal, then nothing but the calm of death. . . .

Every time it happened I lay drenched with sweat in my room, vowing never to let it happen again, promising the dead that violence shall not claim another man without me responding to the call for help. It must never happen again, it need not happen if I and others were vigilant and prevented men from injuring one another. I had cowered in my room with the cushion over my head shutting out the summons for help, suffocating the sense of responsibility; if I was brave enough to watch, I stood aloof with those of my inclining whilst thugs battered and mutilated a man to death, looking on in horror and immobilized with fear.

The knives descended from all angles, three knives jabbing at a man flaying his hands, blocking off the knives, warding

off the strikes coming down on his head, taking most of the stabs on the arms.

"Help me! Please, help me."

"Yes, spy, call them," one of the men said, stabbing on the rhythm of the words.

The warding-off hands became slower, uncoordinated, the stabbers were striking at ease, at selective targets; then the hands became even slower, the victim began the fall, and soon it was over, but for the screaming and the streaming blood. The stabbers stopped and looked at the silhouettes against the walls and the fences, throwing out a challenge.

"Let me see your pass"—Here policemen check the papers of Africans bound for Johannesburg to work in the mines.

"Those who got a sting can come forward," one stabber said. "What? Not one? Who's got pluck? Who wants to see his mother?"

All along Victoria Road to Tucker Street they brandish their knives, clearing people out of their way, and when they are out of sight, we become unfrozen and rush forward to

the man bleeding into the gutter, fumbling frantically to stop the wounds from bleeding the man to death.

"Somebody phone the police for an ambulance."

"There isn't time, stop the first car."

A car is flagged, we persuade the driver, bully him, threaten him with violence if he is leaden and unresponsive, to rush the man to hospital; sometimes we got volunteers to accompany the wounded man to hospital, others would promise to inform the wounded man's relatives; with some luck and the diligence of the hospital staff an occasional victim would survive the assault, but there were those the attackers dragged into dark alleys, assaulted, and left to die away from the notice of the mad crowds of Sophiatown; these we discovered in the morning, dead and stripped of their clothes, left to die in the dark passages, in the open drains, in the skeletons of the demolished houses.

And yet always there was this emasculating silence which, in itself was for the gangsters their best insurance against arrest; they knew that none of us would have, as they say, the pluck to give testimony against them, and our silence sprang from a foundation of fear, the cornerstone of the gangster rule of Sophiatown. . . .

Let Me See Your Pass, Kaffir

PART II

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Unjust laws lead to the breakdown of order in society. People who see that laws are unfair will not follow them and certainly will not help to enforce them. And even more obviously, when laws are actually designed to create inequality or to persecute certain groups, victims cannot be expected to be law-abiding. In fact, the only way to control these victims in most cases is by police rule.

What can be done when the laws of society are unjust? In a democracy, where citizens participate in the government, the laws can be changed. The numerous changes in the civil-rights laws of America in recent years offer a good illustration of this. On the other hand, if the majority of people are subjected to unjust laws enacted by a nondemocratic government, then often the only recourse is revolt, whereby the repressive government is overthrown. In South Africa, however, neither alternative is possible at the moment. Nonwhites do not participate in the government, so democratic changes are impossible, and the nonwhites do not have enough military strength to overthrow the government.

One result is the violent situation that exists in Sophiatown. People take the law into their own hands, as the

vigilante groups and posses did in the "wild West" days of America. The problem with this system of "order" is that it leads to more violence. Without a common authority that all people recognize and respect, there is no way to control people's actions. There is also no place to turn for protection. In the end, people form their own groups to fight violence with violence. The gangs in American cities are exactly this sort of group.

In the second part of "Let Me See Your Pass, *Kaffir*," Bloke Modisane explains how he helped to form a street-corner gang to fight against the hoodlums. Notice, however, that although his gang was formed for good purposes, it ended up being as violent as the other gangs. Violence always leads to more violence!

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

Why would Modisane vote for the *tsotsis* against the police?

What parallels can you find between Sophiatown and American cities?]

I learned, there in Sophiatown, that one looked at the killing and never at the faces of the killers; one also knew that the law is white and justice casual, that it could not protect us against the knives of Sophiatown, so we tolerated the murders whilst the law encouraged them with its indifference. We laughed and made ribald comments when police commissioners complained publicly against the lack of co-operation with the police, against the accusations that the Natives did not recognize their responsibility as citizens, that we do not fly to the law's standard; perhaps we jibed and jeered because the commissioner had not been—on this very question—as eloquent as Thomas Jefferson in his inaugural

speech: "every man would meet the invasions of the public order as his own personal concern."

The law is white, its legislators are white, its executive authority is white, and yet we were being criticized for not flying to the standard of the law; we who were black and therefore denied the responsibility of formulating this law or being ruled by consent. This was probably as amusing as the American and the British democratic principle that all men are born equal—except for Niggers and slaves; they are property. The pronouncements were larded with the usual assurances of police protection, but the inflexions were obvious, the emphasis insinuating on crimes directed against whites and their property. In Sophiatown we hooted at these appeals to patriotism and public duty, they contained conflicts of loyalty and a pragmatic contradiction; the standard function of law, the duty of the police, is a concern with the maintenance of law and order; but discrimination is contained in the law and the police are the instruments of black oppression, and if I had to choose between the *tsotsis* and the police my vote would be cast for the *tsotsis.* This is the morality of black South Africa.

* * *

I was listening to noisy jazz on the record player when one of those interminable screams rose over the noise, it seemed to come from a few feet away, seeming to come from inside the yard; I rushed out of the room with a fighting stick in my hand, but it was out in the street and the woman was screaming the usual summons; I was not feeling particularly brave, I did not want to be savaged with knives, I did not want to die; I was afraid of being afraid. I walked out into the street, up to the man who was slapping the girl; the rescue attempt

was easier than I could have hoped for, the would-be rapist was a boyhood playmate and persuading him, by the continence of our friendship, to employ gentler means of persuasion, was peacefully successful.

"Go home, my sister," I said, "and don't walk alone."

Pieters and I were exchanging .eminiscences, joking about the street fights we had, the territorial protection we paid when we passed through areas controlled by gangs on our way to Balanski's cinema . . . when suddenly I noticed the girl I had rescued advancing toward us with an *impi* [police squad] of six armed men.

"It's them!"

There was no time to hold an *indaba* [meeting], the *impi* was in a fighting mood; Pieters and I broke off in different directions, we were back in the days of the gang wars, running in the face of odds, because he who runs from a fight lives to fight another day. I was Buck Jones racing Silver across the plains, pursued by the crooks, moving rapidly, thinking fast; I was running up Gold Street toward the dark passage running behind the Diggers Hall, I knew every turning in that passage. I lost them. I stopped for a while and listened, then I doubled back over the fence and into the yard of the hall, keeping in the shadows and listening, and back on Gold Street I looked up both sides of the street before emerging from the shadows. I had stuffed my hat inside the shirt and was walking casually down the street when suddenly they pounced upon me; they had apparently anticipated me and were waiting.

I was struck with a stick on the head, the blow staggering me onto the street; blows descended on my body from all sides, most of them thudding on the head which I covered with my hands, my body crouching low, preferring the blows

on the body. Throughout the assault I kept repeating one single thought in my head, a determination to be on my feet; the man who falls during an assault tumbles into his grave, because in Sophiatown a felled man gets kicked in the face and heavy boots crushed on the head.

It was my turn at the guillotine, Sophiatown was revenging herself on me, striking out against the overcrowding, the congestion of hate, the prejudice, the starvation, the frustrating life in a ghetto. They stood back, the people of Sophiatown, and allowed violence to satiate itself: I did not scream, I resigned myself up to my fate, the fate which was linking my destiny with that of my father; this was a communion with him, we would switch back our identities, my coffin would carry his name, as his had carried mine. The beating continued, they struck at my head through the shielding hands, my feet were beginning to weaken, they could not support my body; I was sinking and I surrendered myself to my father, commited my life into his hands. I was not afraid, there was a throbbing in my head but I had gone past the point of feeling pain; I was no longer struggling, I was back in that little mud pool, my hands groping for anything to hold me down, to stop the struggling and drown.

"Hamba, nja," voices shouted. "Go, dog."

Then another voice began screaming in my head: Run, run! My body was wilting on my legs, but I willed it into motion; I was going home. I looped forward, charging on uncoordinated legs, diving forward into the gravel, my face scratching on the ground, but I would not stay down; I hauled myself up, waltzed forward, and dived down onto my face, rising and falling my way home where I collapsed into my mother's room, exhausted from the beating, with a headache which lasted a week.

"You must not do it again," Mother said. "I do not want another death in the house. Is he too, God, to die like his father?"

"You cannot protect all the screaming noises of Sophiatown," Solly Godide said.

I could not explain it to Ma-Willie and to friends, perhaps not even to myself, but it was the only time when I had not been afraid; but the irony of it all is that, as it turned out, it was Sir Galahad, not the dragon, who was slain.

I did not learn [to mind my own business], perhaps because of the influence of the Hollywood films, the daredevil hero complex of the American male; I wanted to be with the good boys against the bad boys, so we formed a street-corner gang: Philip, Spampu, Mannass, Ncali, Valance, Dwarf, Niff, and I: we were the Target Kids, with targets drawn on the sides of the shop on Gold and Victoria Road. Target was . . . a kind of vigilance group concerned with keeping our corner safe from the marauding gangs of Sophiatown; we were neither thieves nor thugs and never carried knives, but we never hesitated to use violence against the *tsotsis,* the bull-catchers, who attacked, robbed, and stripped people. We answered the *tsotsis* with violence, which was a kind of lingua franca, and, in effect, we too were *tsotsis;* legally we should have handed them over to the police, but we were black, the *tsotsis* were black, and the law was white. We had no intention of being produced by whites as witnesses against blacks, this would have exposed us to the vengeance of the *tsotsis,* arranged us in the line of the knives and guns, and to the scorn of other Africans. The *tsotsis* were violent men, the force of violence was the only voice they respected; it was a comforting morality adequately masking the violence in us, we were little giants with power complexes, filled with

acts of cruelty, injustice, and oppression. We cleansed ourselves with rationalizations, armed in point with pious indulgences, like a Christian straight out of the confession box.

* * *

It was Sunday night, Solly Godide, a friend outside the gang, was attacked by the bull-catchers stabbing and robbing him of a watch and wallet; it was done with speed and precision, and by the time we were aware of it the bull-catchers were moving away in different directions; we selected our man and stayed with him along Victoria Road catching up with him in front of the A.M.E. Church, it was probably Philip who tripped him. We handled him with violent rudeness.

"Look, just give us the watch and the wallet."

"I didn't take his watch," he said, "I was not there."

We were little power moguls blind to justice and right, determined to beat the truth out of a stone if necessary forgetting the sacred principle that without law there can be no crime and that without proof there can be no guilt; but I think we wanted a confession more than the wallet and the watch, seeking to justify the beating we were itching for. We decided to beat a confession out of him, we were possessed by the power of violence, it seemed to guide and direct our hands, to add force and viciousness to our blows. It was not until the energy of the violence had exhausted itself, when we were panting, that we stopped.

"Now, will you give us the things?"

Our victim collapsed into our hands, his face contorted with pain, the lips moving, trying to mouth words that had no sound. It was a piteous sight. We looked at each other, ashamed at what we saw in each other, beasts without human

passion, then we began to panic; there was that look of death in his face which filled us with both fear and humanity, and with patient petition we got from him his address; we balanced him on our hands and carried him home, explained to his parents, and every day for a week we went to see him in a kind of appeasement of our conscience.

What if he had died? What possible justification could there have been for it? That he stole a watch and a wallet? Was that the equivalent of a life? I was horrified by the inhumanity, shutting my eyes and blacking out from my mind memories of my father; the equation was obvious, I could not pretend to hate violence and yet allow myself to be maneuvered by it in claiming death. We were not the police, we were not the *tsotsis,* and yet we had come too close to becoming harbingers of death. . . .